


RE-ELECT

A SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT WORKING FOR SCOTLAND



“Scotland is on a journey
and the path ahead is a
bright one. Now is a time
for Scotland to keep
moving forward.”



Our record
Building a better nation



Our team
Working for Scotland



Our vision
A fairer Scotland

Taking Scotland Forward

COUNCIL TAX FROZEN

We will freeze the Council Tax throughout the next Parliament, enabling households to keep more of the money they earn

NHS PROTECTED

We will protect the NHS budget, allowing us to deliver faster and better treatment including the earlier detection and treatment of cancer

EXTRA POLICE

We will continue to drive down crime by keeping the 1000 extra police in our communities and by taking more money from criminals to give back to the communities they have damaged

CREATING JOBS

We will work to win new job-creating powers for the Scottish Parliament

SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

We will give Scots the opportunity to decide our nation's future in an independence referendum

ENERGY WINDFALL

We will increase our renewables target to 100% by 2020, ensuring 130,000 jobs are delivered in the low-carbon economy

YOUTH SKILLS

We will build the skills of young Scots with 100,000 training opportunities each year including 25,000 modern apprenticeships

FREE EDUCATION

We will keep university education free so that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay

FUTURES FUND

We will deliver a fairer Scotland with a new £250 million Scottish Futures Fund, using the savings realised from the Forth Replacement Crossing

BETTER SCHOOLS

And we will ensure a fair start for young Scots with new investment in early years and a school building programme that will cut by half the number of pupils in crumbling schools

These elections are about Scotland. You will choose the best government for our nation. Scotland needs a Scottish Government that is working hard for people in every part of this country.

Over these past four years progress has been made. In many ways Scotland is better than before. Our nation is safer, with 1000 more police in our communities. Treatment in our health service is better and faster, and we've kept it close to home. Family budgets have been protected by the SNP, with the Council Tax frozen, prescription charges scrapped and bridge tolls removed. Class sizes are at a record low in our primary schools, exam results at a record high in our secondaries and more young Scots are in Modern Apprenticeships than ever before.

undertaken by a Scottish political party. It sets out the next steps: our ideas and ambitions for the next five years. With an SNP government putting Scotland first, there is much more we can achieve. Progress has been made but there is more to do. With your help, together we can and we will make Scotland better.

Scotland is on a journey. This manifesto follows the most extensive consultation



Alex Salmond, Leader

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From top, left to right:

Alex Salmond
First Minister of Scotland

Nicola Sturgeon
*Deputy First Minister
and Cabinet Secretary for Health*

John Swinney
*Cabinet Secretary for Finance
and Sustainable Growth*

Kenny MacAskill
Cabinet Secretary for Justice

Michael Russell
*Cabinet Secretary for Education
and Life-Long Learning*

Richard Lochhead
*Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs
and the Environment*



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In this first four-year term of the first ever Scottish National Party government progress has been made here in Scotland. Together, as a nation, we have faced and overcome the biggest global economic shock for four generations. The impact of that economic crisis will be felt for years to come with reduced public spending and too many of our fellow Scots still out of work. However, we are growing stronger once again. Scotland is on a journey. And the path ahead is a bright one. Now is a time for Scotland to keep moving forward and, if we do, prosperity and opportunity will come. Together, we can make Scotland fairer.

Progress

The SNP stands in this election on our record, our team and on our vision for Scotland's future. We too have been on a journey. Many lessons have been learnt and as a government and as a party we are stronger today than we were in May 2007. And thanks to the support of the many Scots who voted SNP in 2007, much has been achieved: crime rates are at a 32-year low; major companies are investing in Scotland creating new jobs; class sizes in our primaries are the lowest in history; family budgets have been protected; waiting times in the NHS are shorter and we are leading the world in offshore renewable technology. And, there is more to do.

Jobs will be a top priority for our next term. We are stepping up our efforts with new support for young Scots. Youth Employment Scotland will offer 100,000 training opportunities including 25,000 modern apprenticeships each year for the next five years.

As part of our work to secure more jobs for Scotland we will continue our efforts to bring new job-creating powers to the Scottish Parliament. With the support of Scots in this election we will press for improvements to the current Scotland Bill to bring greater financial responsibility to the Scottish Parliament. This will include responsibility for Corporation Tax and Excise Duty, enhanced borrowing powers and responsibility for the Crown Estate Commission. And we will bring forward our proposals to give Scots a vote on full economic powers through an independence referendum.

We can enhance the Bill and give our nation the freedom it needs to flourish by taking on more responsibilities here in Scotland. The independence we propose for Scotland is exactly for this purpose. It is with independence – the natural state for nations like Scotland – that we will have the ability to determine our own destiny and build the best future for our country. We, the people of Scotland, have the greatest stake in our future. That is why we are best placed to govern ourselves.

has been made

Wealthier and Fairer

In 2007 we said that Scotland could be wealthier and fairer. And despite the global downturn, progress has been made and is still being made. As of this month, we know that almost 80,000 Scottish businesses are being helped as a result of our Small Business Bonus, with 60,000 small Scottish firms paying no business rates at all. In addition on a personal and family level, our decision to freeze the Council Tax for four years is saving the average Scottish family over £300.

These are just our first steps. As is only fair, we will protect the current concessionary travel scheme. We will continue the Council Tax freeze throughout this Parliament. Over the period of the next Parliament we will consult with others to produce a fairer system based on ability to pay to replace the Council Tax and we will put this to the people at the next election, by which time Scotland will have more powers over income tax. We will also continue with the Small Business Bonus and remain committed to ensuring the Scottish poundage remains at least in parity with England.

Healthier

In 2007 we said that Scots could be healthier, with faster NHS treatment and healthcare close to home. Since then 330,000 Scots have been treated in the local A&Es and hospital units we've saved, including the A&Es at Monklands and Ayr, and the maternity units in Inverclyde and Vale of Leven. And treatment is faster too; waiting times are almost a fortnight faster for outpatients and nearly three weeks shorter for inpatients. That is a testament to the hard work of Scotland's NHS staff.

And of course there is more to do. We are pledged to protect the NHS budget in Scotland. Scotland's National Health Service will receive in full the Barnett consequentials from increases in health spending down south. That will allow us to continue improving treatment, with a particular focus on faster cancer diagnosis and treatment and more flexible access to primary care. And Scotland's NHS will remain firmly in the public sector. We will not follow the route adopted in England which will lead to the dismemberment of the NHS.

Smarter

In 2007 we said that Scotland could be smarter with more free nursery education, smaller class sizes, new schools and more help for students. Since then, despite the pressure on budgets and Labour and Tories opposing many of our plans, progress has been made. Each year 100,000 pre-school Scots receive extra free nursery education, helping them learn and making life a little easier for their parents. Class sizes are at a record low in our primaries and exam results at a record high in our secondaries. And in our colleges and universities, students are receiving additional financial support, through bursaries, loans and grants, and backdoor tuition fees have been scrapped.

And as we move forward, the SNP is committed to expanding pre-school support. We will create a new Sure Start Fund designed to deliver improved life-chances for young Scots. We have ruled out tuition fees and are committed to keeping higher education free. We will reduce by half the number of pupils in crumbling schools and improve standards in our schools by putting our full weight behind the Curriculum for Excellence.

Greener

In 2007 we said Scotland could be greener, with more renewable energy and tough new climate change targets. And since then, Scotland has powered ahead and as a nation risen to the climate challenge. Over recent months major international and Scottish companies have announced huge investment in research and development and manufacturing facilities, which will bring thousands of new jobs. They recognise Scotland's wealth of green energy resources. We have passed the industrialised world's most ambitious Climate Change legislation and are working hard to deliver a 42% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. Indeed, Scotland is now over halfway to reaching that target.

And as we move forward, we will provide the investment and support Scotland needs to ensure we reach our target of 130,000 jobs in the low-carbon economy by 2020. Scotland can produce 100% of the electricity that we need from renewables by 2020 and we will also continue to export electricity from a variety of power sources. We will protect the Climate Challenge Fund, and with our action on green skills we will make sure more Scots are equipped to play their part in our renewables revolution. We will continue to oppose UK plans for new nuclear power stations.

Safer and Stronger

In 2007 we said Scotland's communities could be safer, with more police on our streets and an end to the revolving door prison culture that did too little to stop reoffending. And Scotland now has the lowest crime rates for 32 years. Thanks to the 1036 extra police on our streets crime rates are down, and violent crime is down, including a 30% fall in knife crime. Fear of crime is falling and the most serious offenders are being sentenced to longer prison sentences, as they should be. And, over these past four years £40 million has been seized from Scotland's criminals, allowing us to create opportunities for 500,000 young Scots.

As we work to make Scotland even safer, we will change the law to take more money from more criminals to invest back into our communities. We will maintain the 1000 extra police on our streets and take new action to clamp down on serious and organised crime, with new Serious Crime Prevention Orders.

The Next Stage of Scotland's Journey

Throughout the rest of this manifesto we set out in more detail the values that guide us as a party and our vision and ideas for the next five years of an SNP government.

Over these past four years progress has been made. Together, we are making Scotland better. At this election we can protect that progress and take the next steps towards a Scotland that truly flourishes. I have no doubt, the best is yet to come.

Alex Salmond, First Minister

“Alex Salmond is a guy who means business, there is no nonsense with him.”

Mark Millar, Film Maker and Comic Book Writer



“What I believe is really really important is the spirit of a political party and the spirit of the SNP, under Alex, is the best spirit for Scotland.”

Alan Cumming, Actor



Our Purpose

We are working to create more and better-paid jobs

Job creation will be a top priority for the SNP over the next five years, with a particular focus on our energy opportunity and helping Scots young and old find work.

We see that a more creative Scotland is an essential part of a more successful Scotland

Scotland's culture can enrich our learning and our lives and strengthen our society and our economy. We will recognise and promote our cultural and creative excellence.

We trust the people of Scotland to choose their own future

Independence will allow us to build greater prosperity and fairness here in Scotland and we trust you to decide whether our nation should become independent.

We want healthcare that is better and faster and more convenient

We are all proud of Scotland's NHS and the SNP is working hard to protect and improve it. We want a health service that meets your needs and enables healthier living.

We are building a future where we protect our environment as a truly sustainable society

Scotland's environment – built and natural – is one of our nation's greatest assets. We will work to preserve and enhance it for now and future generations and play our part in meeting the global climate challenge.

We are ambitious for young Scots and will deliver education that equips them to succeed

Investment in young Scots today is an investment in a better future for our nation. We will put even greater focus on the early years and create new opportunities for excellence in our classrooms.

We believe people should feel safer in their homes and their communities

Fear of crime is falling and over the next five years we are determined that people feel even safer going about their daily lives.

We care about reducing inequality in Scotland so we can create a fairer nation

The countries with the least inequality are also the most successful. We will continue our efforts to strengthen our society, with more Scots sharing in our nation's wealth.

We know Scotland can be a voice for peace and justice in the world

Instead of wars and nuclear weapons we believe Scotland's contribution to the world should be based on peace, fair trade, sustainability and social justice.

We are Scotland's Party and put the interests of the people of Scotland first

The SNP is the party of Scotland. We are in business to make Scotland more successful. We care about our nation's welfare and will do all we can to make Scotland the best it can possibly be.

Over these next five years the SNP in government will be guided by some key principles. We will be working for all of the people of this country regardless of their background or origin.

We will work to engage Scottish society as a whole and we will look for the best ideas and the most constructive contributions no matter where they come from. This **social partnership** approach has already seen us take forward ideas from the Federation of Small Businesses and the Scottish Trades Union Congress among others. This is the right approach for Scotland and one we remain committed to.

And for our social partnership to really work, we will look to engage more directly with communities and individuals. Policy must not be top down: many of the best ideas and most effective solutions will come from those, like carers, with the most direct experience of the problems or opportunities that exist. Government can, too often, offer a one-size fits all approach, when what is needed can instead be more local and more personal solutions. So we will work to ensure that a bigger share of funding goes straight to communities themselves, building on initiatives like the Climate Challenge Fund. We don't want money that could make a real difference to people's lives lost within the system.

We will also work to build a **culture of independence**, a culture of responsibility and confidence across our nation. In our approach to government this will see more power devolved to local communities and greater involvement for people in the decisions that most effect the place they live. This theme of empowerment for our communities runs like a thread through our policy platform.

Our aim is to create new opportunities for people in all parts of our nation, because it is by unleashing the talent and energy of our people; by giving Scots a real stake in their communities and our future, that we will enable Scotland to truly flourish. Independence, responsibility and confidence will reap benefits not only at a community or individual level, they will create the necessary platform for success at a national level too. And that is why we will continue to make the case for Scotland to emerge into the family of nations as a full and equal independent state.

Nicola Sturgeon, SNP Deputy Leader

Scottish Futures Fund – Investment in Jobs and a Fairer Future

We are determined to make Scotland fairer. We propose a new Scottish Futures Fund, with a focus on investment in creating and protecting jobs and delivering a fairer future for our nation. Thanks to the savings made by the The Scottish Futures Trust and Transport Scotland in the deal reached to construct the Forth Replacement Crossing we have £250 million of new resources available over the next five years.

This will allow us to invest £250 million in this new Scottish Futures Fund. The new Forth crossing will be a bridge to recovery, creating 3,000 jobs in our economy as part of a £1.5 billion investment. And the fund created from the savings will be a bridge to a fairer future, enabling us to take action to create opportunity and tackle injustice across our society. With this new fund we will take important steps to deliver benefits for communities and individuals across Scotland. The fund will have five elements:

Young Scots Fund

We will give young Scots **a fair chance to realise their potential** with a £50 million youth talent initiative, called the Young Scots Fund, focused on sport, enterprise and creativity. Projects we will support as part of this initiative include improved community sports facilities, the creation of a national centre for Scotland's Youth Companies in Glasgow and supporting a new national Football Academy. We want the investment to enhance opportunity for emerging talent whether through initiatives like a Scottish short film festival based on the successful tropfest model in Australia or the expansion of the Made in Scotland programme as part of an expanded Expo Fund. And it will also be focused on encouraging the emergence of new creative industries with our talented young Scots developing the skills and gaining the support they need to establish a new generation of successful creative companies in Scotland.

Next Generation Digital Fund

We will ensure **fair access to the digital revolution** with a £50 million digital connectivity initiative, called the Next Generation Digital Fund, with the aim of accelerating the roll out of superfast broadband to rural Scotland. We believe people across Scotland should have the same access to the benefits offered by high-speed connection, whether for leisure, business growth or public service delivery. This new initiative will be used to pump-prime and support private sector roll out and take forward community schemes to enhance local connectivity. For example, with the support of local communities, public land could be used to site mobile phone masts which would then be offered to telecoms companies to plug gaps left by the private sector, to expand mobile and broadband coverage.



Sure Start Fund

We will give pre-school Scots **a fair start in life** with a £50 million early years initiative, called the Sure Start Fund, designed to help deliver real change in the life-chances of children in our most deprived communities. It will act as a change fund to support projects designed to deliver effective early intervention in a child's life. The recent report by former Health Minister Professor Susan Deacon on behalf of the SNP government highlighted the need for a more consistent, joined-up approach with a bias for action built in. This fund will kick start that action. We will invest in pathfinder projects including the development of the model for a new generation of Children and Family Centres across Scotland, offering a range of services including childcare, activities, and family support. Drawing on both professional staff and parents themselves, and coupled with effective outreach, these centres can engage with parents and children who might otherwise never get the help they need.



Warm Homes Fund

And we will invest £50 million in a Scotland that is **greener as well as fairer**, with a new Warm Homes Fund to deliver renewable energy and energy-efficient homes in those communities worst affected by fuel poverty. Families and communities will see lower energy costs and will have the opportunity to generate energy and income to support local community projects. It will be open to community groups and Housing Associations to take forward schemes. The aim of this fund will be to support initiatives such as district heating schemes and community-owned renewable power. It will be backed by targeted energy efficiency action so that those communities currently worst hit by higher fuel prices see significant reduction in their fuel costs.



Future Transport Fund

This future transport initiative will see the final £50 million invested in new projects across the country designed to deliver improved connectivity and innovation in transport. This part of the fund will focus on modal shift to help more Scots move to low-carbon and active travel options. It will support an enhanced roll out of the infrastructure we need to ensure a more rapid expansion of electric vehicles on Scotland's roads. This investment will enable a step change for Scotland to ensure that in terms of connection and climate our transport network is fit for the future and playing its part in our move to a low-carbon nation in the years ahead.



The Scottish Futures Fund is about building a fairer nation. We've saved £250 million on the cost of the Forth Replacement Crossing and we'll use this to improve the life-chances of young Scots, give more Scots access to the digital revolution and deliver a greener future.

As resources become available we will look to add to this fund and will encourage the various streams to take forward and support initiatives that generate income that can be reinvested to allow the benefits to be enjoyed by more people and communities across our nation.

Making Scotland Better

An SNP government working for jobs

We'll deliver 100,000 training opportunities each year for young Scots, including 25,000 modern apprenticeships

We'll keep the Small Business Bonus, so 80,000 Scottish businesses continue to pay no rates or lower rates. The Small Business Bonus has protected local jobs in the downturn and will create jobs as our economy recovers

Health treatment that is faster and better

We will protect the NHS Budget, ensuring shorter waiting times and treatment that continues to improve. That means extra investment of £1 billion over the next four years

We plan new action for the early diagnosis and treatment of cancer including a £30m Detect Cancer Early fund

We will keep the NHS public and free, rejecting the plans adopted elsewhere in the UK

So you feel safer in your community

We will keep the 1000 extra police officers in our communities – extra police who have delivered the lowest crime levels in 32 years

We'll expand the Cashback for Communities scheme, taking more money and assets from more criminals to invest in projects for young Scots

A Scotland that stands taller in the world

We will continue with the highly successful Expo Fund and introduce a new Young Scots Fund to support and encourage emerging talent in our studios and on our stages and our sports fields

We will be powerful advocates for Scotland's creative talent and the potential of Scotland's young people

And, because we want Scotland to be a voice for peace and justice in the world, we will protect spending on international development and continue our strong opposition to nuclear weapons

A stronger, more successful nation

We believe Scotland's Parliament should have more job-creating powers so we can do more to create and protect employment across our country

We think you should be able to choose our nation's future in an independence referendum – that is the fair way to take this decision. It is with independence that Scotland will truly prosper

Delivering prosperity and a more sustainable future

Our plans will see 130,000 jobs in the low carbon economy by 2020 and we will increase Scotland's renewable generation target to 100% by 2020

We will protect the Climate Challenge Fund supporting community-led initiatives as we work to meet our target of a 42% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Jobs and opportunity in rural and urban Scotland

We will accelerate the delivery of super-fast broadband in rural Scotland through our £50 million New Generation Digital Fund. This will give more families and businesses across Scotland access to the digital revolution

We'll take forward a new Cities Agenda, led by the Deputy First Minister as our Cities Minister, designed to create more jobs and deliver higher levels of sustainable economic growth in all Scotland's cities

Giving young Scots a fair start in life . . .

We'll do more to support and nurture our young people in their first years of life with a new £50 million Sure Start Fund, helping to improve their life chances and opportunities

And we'll reduce by 60,000 the number of pupils taught in the worst condition schools. That is half the number today

. . . and a fair chance at a university education

We are ruling out tuition fees or a graduate contribution for Higher Education – Scottish education will remain free

A fair deal for Scottish families

We'll freeze the Council Tax throughout the next Parliament, protecting family budgets. This is the right choice at a time of rising prices

And, by keeping Scottish Water in public hands, we will also freeze water bills for the next two years

Working for stronger communities

Our Community Empowerment Bill, will give local people a greater say in their area, enabling them to deal more easily with derelict and eyesore properties and take over underused or unused public buildings for the benefit of their community

A Balanced Budget

The Financial Position

The SNP in government has acted to identify savings within Scotland's budget to allow us, as far as possible, to protect public services. In each of the last four years we have delivered a balanced budget. That means we do not spend any more than we earn. Over the next five years we will build on this record to deliver budget settlements for Scotland that direct maximum funding to the frontline and continue to protect family budgets and business competitiveness.

We are faced with a period of unprecedented Westminster budget cuts as a result of the reduction in Scotland's block grant: a reduction of £1.3 billion in the year ahead. And up to 2014-15 we will see spending reductions of over 11% in real terms, with a 36% cut in our capital budget over the same period. However, by acting early we have released resources to allow us to meet this challenge and provide the finance needed to take forward our plans.

Actions already taken include £839 million of efficiency savings in 2008-09. We have also delivered cash savings of £1,470 million in 2009-10 and we expect to deliver well over £1.6 billion in efficiencies in 2010-11. Our plans for the future include a 3% efficiency saving across the public sector for 2011-12 which will release some £900 million. And we will deliver further efficiencies up to 2014-15 as the recommendations of the Christie Commission are taken forward.

Smarter procurement will deliver savings of £61 million within the Scottish Government in 2011-12, and some £400 million over the next three years. And e-procurement is also saving money for the frontline, with three online auctions achieving savings of around £27 million. A new national agreement for office supplies is saving almost £22 million. And our initiative to bring together public sector energy bills into one national contract is saving £10 million each year.

On top of this we have already delivered £111 million of savings through the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) in 2009-10 with more planned in the years ahead as a result of the SFT's efforts to maximise the return from our capital spending and action to reduce costs to the public purse through the Non-Profit Distributing Model. Indeed savings from the Forth Replacement Crossing will enable us to invest an additional £250 million through our Scottish Futures Fund as we work to make Scotland fairer.

Our programme to simplify the public sector is on track, with a 25% reduction in the number of quangos by the end of this year. This will deliver savings of around £125 million by 2013 and anticipated annual savings of £39 million each year thereafter. We are also taking forward a range of early severance schemes across the public sector and this will reduce the costs of the Senior Civil Service by 25% by 2014-15. Taken together with our action to reduce the number of NHS managers this will release more than £100 million by 2015.

Our pay policy was announced on 17 November 2010 and it includes a pay freeze, cutting the pay bill of the highest earners, implementing a living wage of £7.15 per hour and providing a minimum annual increase of £250 for employees earning less than £21,000. We are also saving £13 million as a result of our actions to freeze bonuses. As a result of these initiatives savings across the public sector will be around £300 million in 2011-12. In addition to these resources we have over £100 million of new money in Barnett consequentials to deliver on our priorities for Scotland.

Public Service Reform

In government we have embarked on reforms of health and social care and reviews of police, fire and rescue services and higher education arrangements. We have also established the Christie Commission to make recommendations on how we can best deliver public services in the future. We will take the recommendations of these important pieces of work into account in delivering a Spending Review in September 2011 covering the years from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

These actions will release substantial new resources – money that will be available to help us deliver more progress for Scotland, as set out in the pages of this manifesto.

We are determined to improve the way government works, building on the reforms already undertaken. The outcome for our people must take precedence over the structures that currently exist. The Christie Commission should inform this process, and we shall bring forward a developed, coherent plan as a priority over these next five years.

We will continue the successful programme of simplification, looking for further opportunities to streamline our public bodies. We will take every opportunity to reduce costs and bureaucracy and improve service delivery. For example, we will maintain a focus on scrutiny improvement which will enable us to deliver savings of at least 20% in the overall direct costs of scrutiny over the next parliamentary term.

We are pursuing innovative approaches to public services, such as the pilots for the Integrated Resource Framework for health and community care. Our Public Services Reform Act means we now have the ability to move swiftly in future with further reform and simplification measures. We are focused on maintaining and improving levels of services and support moves across the public sector towards more collaboration and sharing of services.

There is great potential for us to work with other public sector organisations to deliver improved public services through digital technology, including through the Scottish Government-backed Customer First programme. This programme aims to deliver more convenient and responsive public services, encourage online access to services, and ensure that at least 75% of core service requests can be handled at first point of contact.

Through Customer First we will take forward a programme of delivery improvement including national infrastructure to support local authorities in delivering services, for example shared data storage space, and the National Entitlement Card, a smartcard for people to conveniently access services, which replaces the numerous other card schemes in Scotland.

Our Citizen Account System will also enable the public sector to deliver a wider and better range of online services. And our proposal for a DirectScot portal aims to improve access to public services and information by providing a single convenient access point. The project is currently in a prototype phase, and we are aiming for an initial launch later in 2011.

“John Swinney has done a tremendous job steering the public finances through an extremely difficult period. He has slimmed down central government and pushed through tough efficiency savings to make sure that we can continue to invest in key frontline services.”

Crawford Beveridge CBE

“We are determined to improve the way government works, building on the reforms already undertaken.”



A Scottish Government Working for Jobs

Creating and protecting jobs is at the very top of our agenda.

In the years ahead the SNP will be working hard to deliver new jobs and new opportunities for Scots young and old. As we take the next steps on the road to recovery, my vision for Scotland is of an economy that increasingly benefits from high-paid and high-quality jobs in existing areas of strength like engineering, science and innovation and in the emerging industries, like life-sciences, renewable energy and the creative sector.

Over these next five years that will mean increased effort to improve connectivity within Scotland and from Scotland to the world. It will see ongoing support for the skills and research that will give our nation an advantage. It will mean a continued commitment to low and competitive taxes for our business community; investment in our social economy and new measures to encourage the growth of new sources of finance for growing companies and enterprising communities.

John Swinney

More Jobs and Faster Economic Growth

Over the next five years we will take forward our Scottish Growth Strategy, focusing our efforts on growth companies, growth sectors and growth markets so we can grow jobs and wealth here in Scotland.

Growth Companies: we will direct our efforts and resources to create the right environment for growth companies here in Scotland. By enhancing the underlying strengths and opportunities of our economy we will help Scottish companies to expand and enhance our nation's reputation as an attractive place for international investment.

Growth Sectors: we will continue to support the sectors of our economy which have the potential to drive future growth. We are working hard to make Scotland Europe's green energy powerhouse, so we can make the most of our vast green energy potential and create new jobs. We also have comparative advantages in our creative industries, financial services, food and drink, sustainable tourism and life-sciences, among others.

Growth Markets: over the next five years we will be stepping up efforts to align our investment towards new international growth markets. The global recovery is being led by emerging economies, and improved access to these markets will open up Scottish exports to new consumers – 2.5 billion in India and China alone. This provides important opportunities in what is an increasingly global and competitive marketplace – opportunities we are determined Scottish companies will be well placed to seize.

And, to provide the necessary foundations for these three strands of our strategy we will continue to build Scotland's skills, infrastructure and competitive base. We are committed to ensuring Scotland's business rates package remains the most competitive in the UK, including a commitment to continue to match the English business rates poundage.

We will not make use of the Scottish Variable Rate in the term of the next parliament.

Helping Small Businesses Create Jobs

At the heart of our plans to create more jobs and deliver faster economic growth will be our Small Business Jobs Plan. We will make it easier for small businesses to take on an apprentice and also allow small businesses to share an apprentice, enabling many more businesses to offer apprenticeship opportunities to young Scots. As part of our expansion of apprenticeship places, we will put particular effort into opening up opportunities for training in our small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) tell us that if just one in five of the self-employed in Scotland moved to take on a single member of staff, there would be an extra 40,000 jobs in the Scottish economy. We recognise this potential and so will introduce specific support for small businesses looking to take on their first member of staff, in particular assistance with drafting contracts and setting up payroll and PAYE systems. In the year ahead we will provide specific financial support to encourage small businesses to take on new staff with £7.5 million of employment assistance. This alone can help 7,000 Scots back in to a job.

Small businesses across the country have told us the difference our Small Business Bonus has made during the downturn. So, we will keep the Small Business Bonus – an initiative that is now helping 80,000 local companies, with 60,000 paying no rates at all. The Small Business Bonus has protected jobs in the recession and will create jobs as our economy recovers. It will be a direct investment in our local entrepreneurs, providing a welcome boost to local economies.

We will introduce an online One-Stop Finance Information Service – a single point of information for businesses on government financial support that is available and an advice point for small businesses looking for commercial loans or finance. And because we know access to finance is crucial for job creation and business growth, we will look to expand initiatives, such as the East of Scotland Investment Fund, to widen availability of affordable lending and continue with the Scottish Loan Fund. We will look for new ways to increase the size of this fund beyond the current £95 million investment.

The Scottish Loan Fund is just one part of the Scottish Investment Bank and over the next five years we will take forward this important initiative, building on the £250 million already in place to widen support and loan funding for high-growth Scottish companies, big and small.

Community Jobs Scotland

Improving the employment prospects for young people is an important task in the years ahead, as we work to build on the record 86.8% of young Scots leaving school to move into employment, training or Higher and Further Education. Community Jobs Scotland will provide 2000 new work opportunities in Scotland's third sector, a £10 million investment in young people's futures as part of our wider youth employment and training support. Scotland's charitable and voluntary organisations are superbly placed to provide opportunities for young people to develop skills across a wide range of occupations and this initiative will also provide significant benefits for communities across Scotland.



Export Support Package

We will support growing businesses with a new Export Support Package so that Scotland can sell more to the world, creating jobs here at home. In the year ahead we will provide £2.5 million for a new Export Support initiative. This will deliver bespoke advice and support for 100 Scottish companies looking to enter new markets overseas. Alongside this, we will look to the Scottish Investment Bank to prioritise lending to support the internationalisation of SMEs and we will continue our enthusiastic support and funding for the new Smart Exporter initiative. This collaboration between Scottish Development International and Scottish Chambers International will provide assistance to around 8,000 Scottish businesses over the next three years to help them maximize exporting opportunities.

We are ambitious for Scotland's exporters and confident in their ability to contribute to higher levels of sustainable economic growth. We will set a target to increase exports across all sectors of our economy. We believe Scottish business can deliver a 50% increase in exports over the next 6 years. And to assist new and current exporters we will develop a new online export tool – Virtual Trade Centres – providing information and advice for Scottish companies looking to expand overseas. And because local market knowledge is an essential element of any successful export expansion, we will look to work with existing export companies to deliver a business-to-business mentoring service for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Scottish Banking Strategy

The impact of the financial crisis has been felt by almost every household and business in our country. There is justified anger and real pain for many. That is why we must make sure there can never be a repeat.

Over the next five years the SNP in government will actively support the creation and entry of new retail banks offering services throughout Scotland. We want to see greater competition in the Scottish banking market and wider access to capital for businesses. As part of this, we will support and encourage an expansion of social banking in Scotland. We believe banking must be more closely aligned with the real economy. In government we will host a summit of banks and business to map out a future that delivers the right investment and support. We want to create a new relationship based on the traditional strengths and ethos of Scottish banking and which has Scotland's banks as active partners in business growth and success.

We believe the job of reforming the banks is only half done, and we will urge the UK government to allocate a share of the profits from the sale of the publicly-owned stake in RBS and Lloyds to strengthen and regenerate Scotland's retail banking sector.

And there must also be a change of culture. There is justified outrage at the ongoing excessive bonuses in the banking sector, with reward based on risk rather than contribution to wider economic strength and sustainability. We believe those banks that have been supported by the taxpayer should be required to develop a more rigorous approach on bonuses that reflects the realities of restraint and cutbacks in the public sector.

“Our objective is to re-industrialise Scotland as we research, develop, engineer, fabricate, install and then service the new energy systems that will power this century.”

We also want to make sure that all the lessons of the financial crisis are learnt and that Scotland's specific banking environment and needs are recognised. We will, therefore, campaign for guaranteed Scottish representation in the Financial Services Authority and on the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England.

Attracting More Investment

We are working to make Scotland a more attractive location for investment. We want to make it easier for international companies to set up here in Scotland and will review and reform investor support to ensure that the system of planning, grants, skills and other support is co-ordinated and simplified for inward investors. We will maintain investment in grants designed to attract inward investment and will establish four new Enterprise Zones. We will explore the creation of one or more Low Carbon Enterprise Zones as a way of attracting new green energy and low carbon companies to set up in Scotland.

Investing in Innovation

Scotland is already a world leader in innovation. We will continue to encourage and support Scottish innovation and – just as importantly – work to ensure more of the economic benefit of our inventiveness is retained in Scotland. The NHS has a big part to play in this as a major public procurer. We will also examine different approaches to incentivise research within the NHS, building on the work of NHS Research Scotland so that Scotland becomes an even more attractive location for investment by international pharmaceutical companies.

Scotland is at the leading edge across a range of fields and technologies. We will continue to offer our full support for the International Technology and Renewable Energy Zone, a hub of engineering excellence in Glasgow. We will do what we can to see this initiative expand. We also propose an investment of £45 million through SMART: SCOTLAND to support near-market research and development projects by small and medium enterprises. And, in the year ahead we will provide £17 million, specifically to stimulate growth in the key industries set to drive the global economy, like life-sciences, digital and energy.

Reduce Business Burdens

The SNP is committed to making Scotland into a competitive environment to allow businesses to prosper. Unlike the UK we have taken a risk-based approach to regulation and have focused on collaboration with business and other partners supported through the Regulatory Review Group to address specific issues. For example, we are encouraging innovative regulatory practice and just this month have introduced new Business and Regulatory Impact Assessments requiring officials to work with business to improve the way that regulation is applied. We will continue to work to ensure that a proportionate and effective approach to regulation is adopted.

Access to Public Sector Contracts

The SNP introduced Public Contracts Scotland (PCS), a free-to-access portal designed to improve access to public contract opportunities, and recently made available the world's first App to alert businesses to new public sector contracts. PCS now has over 49,000 registered suppliers (84% of whom are SMEs) with 74% of the 14,000 contracts advertised awarded to SMEs. We will extend this scheme so that contractors of major capital infrastructure projects also advertise sub-contracts on Public Contract Scotland.

To further support Scottish companies as they seek to win their fair share of public sector contracts, we will establish a unit to provide local businesses with advice to make them better placed to win public sector contracts in Scotland and throughout the UK.

We will ask every company in receipt of a significant government contract, or public support, to produce a training and apprenticeship plan as part of our wider action on skills.

We will also continue with the successful Business Club Scotland initiative and introduce a new national database for supplier pre-qualification information to reduce duplication of effort and make it simpler for Scottish companies to apply for and secure public sector work.

And, because we know the importance of cash-flow we will continue to encourage the wider public sector to follow the Scottish Government's lead and require payment of valid contractor and sub-contractor invoices within 10 days throughout the supply chain.

Planning

We will take forward a series of new improvements to the planning system. This has been a key priority of the SNP since 2007 and we know that a more efficient and effective planning system will be good for investment and growth. The improvements, set out in detail in the Scottish Government's Economic Recovery Plan, will speed up planning decisions, avoid unnecessary delays in new development and act as a boost for the construction industry. We will continue to press all public authorities to improve planning performances.

In particular we will take forward an approach which involves communities at an earlier stage and engages them more effectively in the design of developments. The current pilot projects suggest that this brings benefits for the developments and the communities involved. We also want to see a wider understanding of the planning system, and a recognition of the important role planners have in the creation of more sustainable communities and in the delivery of higher levels of sustainable economic growth.

Other priorities include helping unlock developments currently stalled due to infrastructure needs, improving the compulsory purchase process, and ensuring cost and efficiency benefits through reform of planning consents.

Public Sector Employment

Scotland's public sector is an important employer. Our decision to freeze wages for those earning over £21,000 and deliver a Living Wage for those on the lowest earnings, will allow us to protect employment as part of our social contract. We are committed to a policy of no compulsory redundancies and have reached agreement to deliver this for the 30,000 staff within government and our agencies. We are working to extend it across the public sector. This will provide certainty for thousands of households across Scotland who are already dealing with pressures on family budgets caused by rising prices and higher UK taxes such as VAT.

By keeping more people in employment at this time when labour market conditions remain difficult, we are also maintaining income levels. More people will still have their wages to spend in local shops and businesses, protecting local economies and the wider Scottish economy.

Invoices paid within 10 days

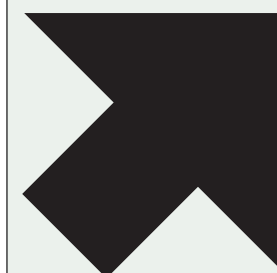


from **86%** Dec 2008 – Mar 2009 to

94%

April 2009 – Mar 2010

Benefit from the Small Business Bonus



from **£0M** 2006/07 to

£128M

2011/12

Written planning appeals decided in 12 weeks



from **6%** 2007/08 to

85%

2010/11

The Skills to Succeed

Scotland's success will be built on the talent and the skills of our people.

My vision is of a Scotland where more and more Scots are able to fulfil their ambitions and take advantage of new opportunities in their work or in their study. I want to see a Learning Scotland, where people strive to develop new skills, nurture their talents and to push the boundaries of their knowledge.

We are entering an age where knowledge – from the technical to the theoretical – is essential if Scotland is to truly prosper. Improved skills will be crucial for our competitiveness in the years ahead. Better skills means new and better jobs, higher salaries and new business opportunities. The skills landscape needs simplification in order to maintain Scotland's cutting edge in this area. Scotland has many natural resources, and the most important is without doubt our people. That is why we are working to ensure Scotland has the education and training system it needs to succeed. It is why we are planning new training opportunities and more flexible approaches to training – proposals that will make a difference.

Michael Russell

Helping young Scots find work

Over the next five years we will do more to help young Scots find the right training and employment. We have firm foundations to build on, including a record number of apprenticeship places announced in the Budget earlier this year. The SNP government's Economic Recovery Plan sets out the initiatives we will take in the year ahead. These include providing 46,500 training opportunities in 2011–12, including 7,000 flexible training opportunities within small and medium-sized enterprises and additional funding of £11.5m to help support the record 25,000 Modern Apprenticeship starts.

Taking this forward, we are committed to delivering continued opportunities for young Scots. Youth Employment Scotland will mean:

- 25,000 apprenticeship places a year – for the next five years
- £20 million of extra investment in training for work – ensuring 25,000 places for young people struggling to get into work
- Record support for college bursaries by continuing the £10 million of additional funding this coming year to provide 50,000 bursaries a year for the next five years

We will continue to focus on opportunities for young people making sure that programmes reach those most in need and particularly young women (who form the fastest growing section of the young employed) and those furthest from the labour markets. Rural Scotland also needs to be assured that rural industries and rural employment will be supported by training and apprenticeship activity.

Supporting enterprising young Scots

We also propose a further initiative targeted at Young Scots in training and higher and further education. We will establish a Youth Enterprise Scotland Challenge with a national prize fund of £100,000 to be awarded to the teams with the best ideas for taking forward a new business enterprise. This prize fund will be matched by a further £100,000 to provide mentoring and other support to the 10 finalists as they develop their concepts. We have seen the success of the MIT challenge in the USA, with that competition resulting in the creation of 130 new businesses and 2,500 new jobs.

Making training work better

Under SNP plans, local community partnerships will now have a greater role in commissioning training, putting decision making into the hands of those working directly with young people locally. And we are also examining ways of moving to a more demand-led approach – with employers and trainees being able to work together to choose the type of training opportunity and provider. We will publish proposals by the end of 2011, with the aim of ensuring training best meets the needs of the trainee and the business.

Modernising the modern apprenticeship

We also propose the creation of a new Graduate Apprenticeship. These university-level apprenticeships will enable new links between business, students and our universities, allowing students to work and earn as they study and improving work-focused skills alongside flexible higher level study. And we will adopt a similar approach for a wider range of College courses, with Technical Apprenticeships at HNC and HND level, focused on more of the technical skills our economy will need in the years ahead. This will build on the current Modern Apprenticeship. We will also ensure that science, technology, engineering and mathematics are promoted by means of skills training and that the “internship culture” is developed to ensure better links between enterprise and further and higher education.

Employability

We will take forward the recently announced £168 million national skills development programme to strengthen Scotland's workforce. Using £64.6 million of European Structural Funds, and with additional contributions from the STUC, third sector, Community Planning Partnerships, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council, we will be able to deliver an extensive range of employability and training services for the unemployed, the lowest paid and people from deprived areas, ranging from early engagement through to in-work support and skills development.

Adult literacy

Although adult literacy in Scotland is already on a par with the world's most advanced economies, we are determined to improve literacy and numeracy levels even further. We will take forward Adult Literacies in Scotland: 2020 as part of our literacy action plan. This will include local promotional plans to increase awareness of the services available; ensuring employers are aware of the benefits of workplace learning and ensuring learners have access to high quality resources including e-learning technology.

Greater integration of services

We want the Scottish Parliament to be able to do more to deliver the most effective action on employment and skills. We will look to improve the current Scotland Bill with the devolution of Job Centres, so we can better integrate the training and employability initiatives taken here in Scotland with the work and activity of JobCentre Plus.

PACE

We will continue to improve the flexibility and responsiveness of the PACE programme, ensuring that when redundancy takes place there is a co-ordinated response from the public sector which offers help to individual workers quickly and effectively.

The Digital Economy

We will take forward the E-Skills Placement Programme where we will place 750 students from universities and colleges across Scotland in IT companies to boost skills and provide in-work experience.

“We are entering an age where knowledge – from the technical to the theoretical – is essential if Scotland is to truly prosper.”



Infrastructure, Transport and Connectivity

“In total we have set out capital investment in Scotland up to 2014-15 worth more than £11.5 billion.”

Digital Scotland

In October last year we set out our Digital Ambition for Scotland and have recently published our Digital Strategy. Our aim is that:

- next generation broadband will be available to all by 2020, and significant progress will be made by 2015; and
- the rate of broadband uptake by people in Scotland should be at or above the UK average by 2013, and should be highest among the UK nations by 2015.

We want a particular focus on the early roll out of superfast broadband to Scotland's rural communities and an increase in digital take up in our most disadvantaged communities.

Our Broadband Reach Project has already provided basic broadband to over 99% of the Scottish population – a figure comparable with UK coverage levels. This is a major increase from only 43% availability in 2001 when Scotland lagged behind the UK level of 63%. However, we know there is more to do. We will work with the UK government to develop a strategic national broadband plan for Scotland that will benefit from a share of planned UK-wide funding. We are determined to secure the maximum possible income from this £530 million fund. We will work with our enterprise agencies and local authorities to take forward our strategic plan so that Scotland is well placed to secure the necessary levels of investment.

Digital Connectivity in Rural Scotland

We will accelerate the roll out of superfast broadband in rural Scotland as part of our £250 million Scottish Futures Fund. Working with our enterprise agencies and local authorities we will convene a second Rural Broadband Summit to ensure the maximum effectiveness of our new investment. Funding has already been made available through the Highlands and Islands broadband pilot which will lever EU funding and industry investment, and aims to cover around 40 population centres throughout the region.

We are now working with partners in the South of Scotland to develop a local broadband plan for that region – this plan will be the first step in work to build a critical mass of demand for next generation services, something that is crucial for the long-term sustainability of any regional rural broadband plan.

We see the Community Hub model as an important part of accelerated digital roll out in rural Scotland, based on the success of similar models in community energy.

The Public Sector Playing its Part

We have already made significant investment in high-speed broadband across the public sector in Scotland with the Pathfinder, Interconnect and JANET networks. We are investing £90 million in Pathfinder alone. Public sector partners must now work together to maximise the potential impacts of these networks in delivering next generation broadband across the wider community, particularly in rural areas. We have also commissioned a review of the strategic management of investment in Scottish public sector ICT infrastructure (the McClelland Review). We will take forward the recommendations of this review to ensure that government activity supports the roll out of broadband, and delivers significant savings in ICT procurement.

Access to Digital

Currently too many Scots are failing to participate in the digital revolution and we will work over the next five years to widen access and increase participation. We will engage with established suppliers and community organisations to investigate options for recycling computer equipment and making it available at lower cost to individuals and community centres. We will publish an options paper later this year.

Improving Mobile Coverage

3G coverage in Scotland is currently not good enough. We want to see a significant expansion of coverage. Over the course of 2011, we will therefore work with the industry and Ofcom to identify barriers to increased mobile coverage and assess how these may be overcome. We will make appropriate representation to the UK Government and Ofcom to ensure that forthcoming spectrum auctions maximise the potential impact on future mobile broadband coverage in rural Scotland. Rural Scotland must benefit from and participate fully in 4G services at an early stage.

Connectivity – Transport

Despite the reduction in our capital budgets, we will still take forward a major programme of investment in Scotland's transport infrastructure. Our new non-profit distributing (NPD) programme, developed by the Scottish Futures Trust, includes investment in important transport projects with a capital value of £1 billion. These are:

- the Borders Railway project
- M8 Baillieston to Newhouse, M74 Raith Junction and M8, M73 and M74 network improvements
- the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and A90 Balmedie.

And through Network Rail's Regulated Asset Base (RAB) we will also take forward the important Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement programme which will see the electrification of much of the central Scotland rail network and more-frequent and faster journeys between Edinburgh and Glasgow, including services of just over half an hour.

Other rail investment is seeing an increase in train services on the Airdrie to Bathgate railway to four trains per hour; the deployment of the new fleet of longer electric trains between Glasgow, Ayrshire and Inverclyde, and Edinburgh and East Lothian; and an increase in long distance services to Inverness on the Highland Mainline from nine to eleven trains per day. Our proposals will also mean faster and more-frequent connections between Inverness and Aberdeen, and between these cities and the central belt. We will work with train operating companies to roll out the availability of wi-fi on trains in Scotland.

Network Rail's decision to devolve its Scottish operations opens up the possibility of a re-integration of rail services in Scotland. We will make the case to the UK government for this integration to take place so that we can make delivery of rail services more efficient for the benefit of rail users in Scotland.

We will continue work to deliver the Forth Replacement Crossing, on time and on budget. And, among other projects, we will continue development of a route strategy and improvements for the A96 and dualling the A9. The A9 is a key artery in Scotland's transport network and we will continue to invest in improvements to the road on a continuing and progressive basis. We are fully committed to dualling the A9 from Perth to Inverness and have fast-tracked work to extend

the dualled section at Crubenmore. Other priorities include significant investment for both the proposed Glasgow Fastlink and for the modernisation of the Glasgow Subway.

In recent months the SNP government has provided an extra £19 million to deal with the damage caused to our roads by the severe winter weather. That includes additional resources for our trunk road network. This means maintenance teams are working across Scotland at the moment with the target of repairing the damage to our trunk roads by June of this year. We will continue to prioritise road maintenance in the face of the significant reductions in Scotland's capital budget by the Westminster government.

Our plans will also include progress on a new integrated ticketing system for Scotland and increased investment in our ferries. We will continue with Road Equivalent Tariff on the current routes, and look to roll out to the Argyll and the Clyde islands in light of the Western Isles pilot. We will also keep our bridges toll free.

Infrastructure Investment

In addition to this transport investment, our capital programme to construct the £840 million Southern General Hospital, ensure a successful Commonwealth Games, expand our school building plans and to embark on a £2.5 billion Non-Profit Distributing programme will give a much-needed boost to jobs and the economy. We are also carrying forward £100 million from 2010-11 to support capital investment in 2011-12.

In total we have set out capital investment in Scotland up to 2014-15 worth more than £11.5 billion. That will allow us, over the next five years to take forward some key infrastructure investment. Examples of our capital investment plans for our schools, colleges, prison estate and health service, among others, are set out throughout this manifesto. We are also working to stimulate further investment through innovative measures such as tax increment financing, the National Housing Trust and investment through the JESSICA Fund.

Scottish Water

We will keep Scottish Water in public hands and will oppose attempts by other parties to privatise or mutualise it. As part of our efforts to improve the Scotland Bill we will also seek substantial and early borrowing powers for Scottish Water.

Water is a key commodity of the 21st century and we will use ours for economic growth, for environmental protection, and for humanitarian aid. The hydro-economy provides huge opportunities for Scotland which we are determined to seize. That is why we will take forward our proposed legislation to expand the role of Scottish Water.

We want to build on Scottish Water's record of investment and improvement. Our funding is enabling Scottish Water to freeze household water bills for the next two years and deliver a £2.5 billion investment programme which will include the upgrading of 85 water treatment works and 99 wastewater treatment works between 2010 and 2015.

Health

“A health service where health inequalities are reduced and patient care and patient wellbeing are the top priority.”

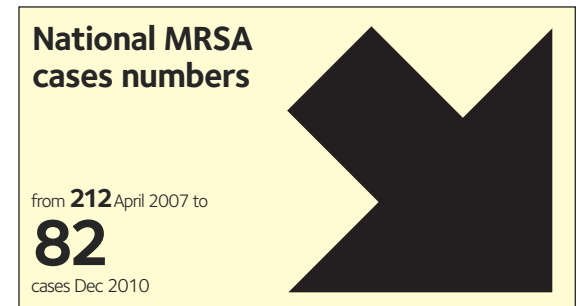
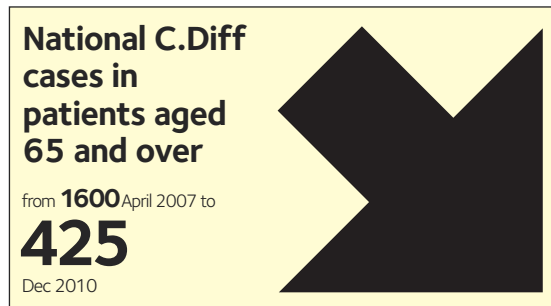
Scotland can be healthier with healthcare that is better, faster and more convenient.

The SNP has a clear vision for the future of our nation's health service. We want to see a health service that delivers faster treatment, close to home. A health service where health inequalities are reduced and patient care and patient wellbeing are the top priority.

Progress Has Been Made

- We have abolished hidden waiting lists and waiting times are at a record low. In March 2007 there were 32,000 outpatients waiting more than 12 weeks – by March 2010 only 150 outpatients waited more than 12 weeks. In March 2007, 10,000 inpatients waited more than 9 weeks – by 2010 this figure had fallen to 300.
- We have met the 62-day cancer waiting time target – a target Labour failed to meet – and have set a new 31 day target which we have met a year ahead of schedule.
- We have introduced the Patients' Rights Act which establishes in law a 12 week treatment time guarantee and a new right to complain.
- We kept open the A&E units at Monklands and Ayr Hospitals.
- We have cut MRSA infection rates by almost two-thirds, and cut C.Diff rates by almost three-quarters, since we came to office.
- We have increased the number of consultants, doctors, nurses, dentists, emergency workers and cleaners in the NHS since 2007.
- We have increased the number of people registered with a dentist by over one million and have opened a new dental school in Aberdeen.
- We have tripled the investment to tackle alcohol abuse and supported the NHS to deliver more than 150,000 alcohol brief interventions.
- We abolished prescription charges, ending the unfair tax on ill health.

In the next Parliament, an SNP Government will ensure that we continue the progress that has been made.



An SNP Government will Protect the Health Budget

We recognise that if we want to have a first-class health service in Scotland the resources need to be there. That is why we have guaranteed that the revenue budget of the Scottish NHS will be protected in real terms. That means that in four years' time the budget of the NHS will be more than £1 billion higher than it is today.

We will also support the NHS to make a further £300 million in efficiency savings in the next year, every penny of which will be retained by NHS Boards for reinvestment.

We will also reduce the number of senior managers working in the NHS by 25% over the next parliament and take forward the recommendations of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body on consultant distinction awards.

It is only by protecting the budget – and ensuring that money is focused as much as possible on point-of-care services – that we can continue to deliver improvements in services, invest in staff and ensure that we keep up with developments in technology and drugs.

An SNP Government will Guarantee No Compulsory Redundancies in the NHS

The Scottish NHS depends on its workforce to deliver the excellent treatment that we all expect. We owe it to that workforce to provide stability and security as a strong foundation for the NHS. So we will guarantee that there will be no compulsory redundancies in the NHS.

Improving the Quality of NHS Care

The SNP will keep waiting times low and we will focus just as hard on improving other aspects of the quality of care. We will drive forward the implementation of the NHS Quality Strategy over the next Parliament.

A New Front in the Battle against Cancer

Over the last four years the SNP government has made real progress in cutting cancer waiting times. We will maintain that progress. However, too often in Scotland cancers are not detected early enough and late detection means poorer survival rates. We will therefore embark on a Detect Cancer Early Initiative with a target of increasing the number of cancers detected at the first stage of the disease by 25%. In the first instance, the Initiative will be directed at lung cancer, breast

cancer and colorectal cancer. If successful the Detect Cancer Early Initiative could be saving more than 300 lives per annum by the end of the next parliament.

Tackling Hospital Infections is a Top Priority

We have tripled investment to tackle Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) during our period in office. We provided funds to employ 1,000 additional cleaners in our hospitals. And we have established the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate which provides a tougher inspections regime to ensure that hospitals achieve and maintain higher standards of cleanliness. These initiatives have achieved results, with infection rates for MRSA down by almost two-thirds and rates of C.Diff down by almost three-quarters, since March 2007.

We will continue to tackle hospital infection as a top priority, maintaining our investment in the various initiatives we have taken to combat HAIs. And we will introduce new minimum standards for MRSA screening in Scottish hospitals.

The SNP's decision to maintain NHS spending in real terms means we will be able to meet these targets and continue to drive down hospital infections across Scotland.

Keeping the NHS Local

As one of our first acts in government we reversed Labour's decision to close A&E services at Monklands and Ayr hospitals. We have also protected local services across the country in Aberdeen, Vale of Leven, Inverclyde and Edinburgh. We initiated the Independent Scrutiny Panel to ensure that local views and priorities are taken into account and that major service changes are always based on improving clinical outcomes.

We improved access to GPs in the evenings and at weekends through the Extended Hours initiative – more than 70% of GPs now offer out-of-hours services for patients and we will seek to increase this further. We will also seek to further enhance the role of pharmacists, building on the introduction of the Chronic Medication Service, and encourage even closer joint working between GPs, pharmacists and other community services. Through the Telecare Development Programme we will increase the number of people who are able to receive telecare services at home.

The SNP government has proved its determination to keep services local and improve the availability of these services and we will maintain our commitment to local services.

The Pandemic Flu

The Scottish National Health Service showed it was ready and prepared to meet the demands of the H1N1 Flu Pandemic which hit Scotland in 2009. We worked closely with the other countries of the UK and provided a timely response to the Pandemic with adequate supplies of antivirals and vaccines.

We have learnt lessons from the Pandemic and the NHS response to the seasonal flu outbreak this winter showed this; we maintained plentiful supplies of vaccines and achieved record vaccination rates amongst vulnerable groups, in particular amongst pregnant women.

We shall continue to learn lessons and remain vigilant.

Delayed Discharges

from 606 Jan 2007 to

167

Jan 2011



No Privatisation of the Scottish NHS

We will continue to reject the Tories and Liberals' privatisation agenda south of the border. We have ended Labour's privatisation experiment by bringing Stracathro Hospital back into the NHS.

The SNP remains 100% committed to the Scottish NHS as a publicly funded and publicly-delivered service.

Investing in NHS Infrastructure

We have invested a record amount in bricks and mortar and new equipment over the past four years. We have laid the groundwork for the new £840 million Southern General Hospital in Glasgow – fully paid for by the public purse. And despite cuts of more than one-third in our capital budget – imposed by the Westminster Government – we will improve services with new hospitals in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and new facilities across the country including in Aberdeen, Highlands, Lanarkshire, Dumfries, Grampian and Dundee.

In communities across Scotland we plan a continued investment in new health centres, and other health and social care facilities. This will mean that more Scots than ever before will have access to the best quality care close to home.

Family Nurse Partnerships

We know that the early years – including pregnancy – are the most important in a child's development. We have learned from the United States that the Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) scheme can make a real difference to the health and development of children and helps mothers and fathers become more competent parents. FNP provides substantial nursing support to mothers in the final six months of their pregnancy and continues to give support for two years thereafter. It provides real help and support to young mothers and the SNP government has established a pilot FNP scheme for teenage mothers in NHS Lothian with further schemes in the pipeline in Tayside and Glasgow. A re-elected SNP Government will roll out FNP across Scotland providing support for teenage mothers and giving their babies the best start in life.

A Healthier Scotland

We have abolished prescription charges and are committed to keeping them free.

We will also take forward the Life Begins at 40 initiative to help people over 40 check up on their health. Keep Well, which currently provides health checks in certain areas of high deprivation, will be extended to cover all of Scotland's poorest communities by 2012. This is one part of our action to tackle health inequalities in Scotland, and builds on the 90,000 health checks already delivered. We will continue Equally Well, our strategy for tackling health inequalities. And we will also start a four-year pilot to test the effectiveness of universal, face-to-face 'health MOTs' for the over 40s.

We will continue to support and implement our action plan to reduce the burden of stroke and heart disease in Scotland.

Action on Alcohol, Tobacco and Obesity

Over the past few years, we have made progress in addressing Scotland's relationship with alcohol. The new Alcohol Act will further tackle irresponsible alcohol promotions, end quantity discounting and introduce a Challenge 25 age verification scheme. We have also supported the NHS to deliver more than 150,000 alcohol brief interventions. Our effort to introduce minimum pricing was blocked by opposition politicians who were prepared to put party politics ahead of public health. Minimum pricing of alcohol is evidence based, and supported by doctors, nurses, the police and all those on the front line who deal with the effects of alcohol abuse.

An SNP government will introduce a Minimum Pricing Bill as a priority in our first legislative programme and we will seek to build a coalition of support for it in Parliament to match the one that already exists outside of Parliament.

As well as our action to combat alcohol misuse, we will continue to take action on smoking and obesity.

Tobacco remains the biggest single preventable cause of death in Scotland. We will continue to tackle this issue and aim to reduce the 13,300 adult deaths and thousands of illnesses caused by tobacco every year by ensuring a new comprehensive robust tobacco control strategy for Scotland is put in place to replace the current strategy which has come to an end. This strategy will focus on prevention and cessation and include ambitious targets for reducing smoking across Scotland.

Obesity is on the increase in Scotland, as it is across the developed world. We have published a strategy which sets out a long term commitment to tackling overweight and obesity, which concentrates on four key areas: food consumption; integrating physical activity into people's everyday lives; recognising the importance of encouraging health behaviours in the early years; and encouraging employers to take a role in promoting health and wellbeing in and through the workplace. We will drive forward the implementation of this strategy over the next parliament.

“An SNP government will introduce a Minimum Pricing Bill as a priority in our first legislative programme”

Wellbeing

“We owe it to Scotland’s carers not only to get the laws and the guidance right, but also to make sure that words are translated into action on the ground.”

Improving Dental Health

Over the past four years we have made real strides forward in improving dental health. There are 1.1 million more people registered with a dentist than when we came to office. We have increased the number of dentists by 700 – that’s an increase of more than 20%. We have also established the Aberdeen Dental School. As a result oral health amongst children is at a record high. These impressive results have been achieved as a result of a record investment in dental services. We are committed to continuing this progress during the course of the next Parliament.

Mental Health

Over the past four years we have increased investment in child and adolescent services and in new psychological services. The SNP’s priorities remain promoting good mental wellbeing and reducing the occurrence of mental illness. Improving the quality of life of those experiencing mental illness is vital to doing just that. We are sympathetic to calls for a new Mental Health Bill and we will consult on what should be included as part of the wider development of a national Mental Health strategy.

Free Personal Care

The SNP Government is fully committed to maintaining Free Personal and Nursing Care. We instituted the Sutherland Review into Free Personal Care and followed up Lord Sutherland’s report by increasing investment by an additional £40 million. We have also ensured that there are annual increases in payments and that policies on meal preparation have been sorted out.

Integrating Health and Social Care

In the past few years there has been significant progress in reducing delayed discharges and improving services for older people but there is still room for improvement. We recognise that in order to improve services for older people generally there will need to be a better integration of health and social care. We have been testing different approaches over the past two years and will deliver a single integrated system of health and social care across Scotland. This will ensure that the older person is at the centre of service delivery.

The process of improvement is already underway and will be facilitated by £70 million of investment announced earlier this year in a new Change Fund. This fund will support better-integrated older people’s services delivered by health boards, councils, and the third and independent sectors. We want to see the third sector and carers play a key role as partners in the process given their important role in the lives of those cared for. To that end we will ensure that from 2012-13 onwards at least 20% of the Change Fund spend is dedicated to supporting carers to continue to care.

And, to support the wider needs of those Scots suffering from dementia, we will continue to implement Scotland’s first National Dementia Strategy, to make sure the public sector and the third sector are working together most effectively to deliver the care and support families need.

Self-Directed Support

We will take forward our plans to enshrine in law new rights for people who need care and support. We have published a draft Bill and a new Self-Directed Support strategy – aimed at putting care users at the heart of decision-making about their care packages. The development of self-directed support will be backed by £3.4 million investment for 2011-12 – an increase of £1.4 million on previous funding.

Caring for carers

Scotland depends on the work of unpaid carers. Without their support the lives of tens of thousands of Scots would be so much more difficult and there would be significant additional pressures on our public services. We owe it to Scotland’s carers not only to get the laws and the guidance right, but also to make sure that words are translated into action on the ground.

Over these next five years we will work to make sure that unpaid carers are treated as partners in the health service and the particular circumstances of young carers is better recognised in our schools. Treatment for those cared for can and will be improved when the knowledge and experience of their carers is fully taken into account, and the SNP government will show leadership on this issue to ensure best practice becomes universal practice.

We want carers themselves to have a more direct voice in the decision making process and will bring forward proposals for an annual ‘Carers Parliament’ which will allow carers themselves to raise the issues that impact most on their lives with MSPs and Scottish Government ministers.

Because we recognise the pressures on unpaid carers, this year’s budget includes funding to maintain our commitment to an extra 10,000 weeks’ respite provision per year. We will protect this investment over the next five years. We will provide an additional £2 million on top of the £1 million already committed for each of the next four years to provide short breaks for families who have severely disabled children, making our commitment £6 million in total. We will take forward our new Carers and Young Carers Strategy and will continue with our £5 million investment each year in the Carer Information Strategies delivered through the NHS. This provides much-needed support to local carer centres and training for carers. And, because we recognise the pressures on family budgets as a result of higher fuel costs, we will also extend our Energy Assistance Package to people on Carers’ Allowance. We will also continue our activity to assist Kinship carers.

We all have a role to play in supporting carers. That’s why the SNP will encourage Scotland’s business community to play its part too. We will create a new Caring for Carers Employers’ Kite-mark. This will recognise those employers who offer the best support to carers, allowing them the flexibility they often need to deliver care at home.

Autism

We will also implement the new Autism Strategy for Scotland to help improve diagnosis and support for people with autism and their families. This is backed up with new resources of £10 million over the next four years.

IVF

We will continue to address the variation in waiting times for IVF treatment and during the next Parliament we will work to establish a maximum waiting time of 12 months.

A more equal Scotland

Scotland can never be considered truly successful until all of its citizens consider themselves to be equally valued members of society. We are determined that Scotland will constantly strive to be a more equal society. That’s why we have protected our Equality budget for 2011-12, keeping it at the same level as 2010-11 level. We will maintain this budget over the course of the next term.

We recognise the range of views on the questions of same-sex marriage and registration of civil partnership. We will therefore begin a process of consultation and discussion on these issues.

We will also take forward plans to support the provision of British Sign Language lessons for parents of new-born deaf children. We believe this can make a difference to the lives of young deaf Scots and their parents.

We will continue to invest in services for deaf Scots and blind and partially-sighted Scots and work to improve access to services and remove barriers to inclusion. We will support the further development of the successful model of one-stop shops for all sensory impairment needs. We will continue to protect free eye tests in Scotland and work to build on the progress in improving access to audiology services.

Fuel Poverty

We are working hard to tackle fuel poverty, with a much more targeted approach than in previous years. Our Energy Assistance Package (EAP) offers a range of support to Scots struggling to heat their home, including free energy efficiency advice, home insulation, all the way up to a full central heating system. Since we took office 40,000 new heating systems have been installed – vital support for many pensioner households. We are prioritising these measures toward those most at risk of fuel poverty and we will continue this support in the next parliamentary term. And, our new £50 million Warm Homes investment through the Scottish Futures Fund will enable us to do even more to tackle fuel poverty.

We have also established home insulation schemes which have provided loft and cavity wall insulation measures across Scotland. We shall continue to fund the Universal Home Insulation Scheme providing free insulation to families keeping homes warmer and cutting carbon emissions. Our Boiler Scrappage Scheme has proved very popular and we shall continue to fund the scheme providing support for 30,000 new boilers over the course of the next Parliament.

Tackling Child Poverty

The SNP is committed to ending child poverty in Scotland. That is a big ambition, but one that a nation of Scotland’s wealth should be determined to achieve. We have recently published our first Child Poverty Strategy, which will be updated every three years. This has been developed in close consultation with stakeholders, including the End Child Poverty Coalition, and we will work to implement it over the next parliamentary term.

Housing

Housing is crucial to the economic, health and social wellbeing of Scotland's people.

That's why we have been working hard to ensure more Scots have a home that is secure, warm and affordable. Despite the difficult economic conditions, we have launched a revival in council house building since taking office, with more than 3,300 funded by the Scottish Government since 2007, compared to just six built in the four years before that. Construction by housing associations is also at its highest level in almost two decades, with over 17,000 completed since we took office.

We have also taken steps to help first-time buyers. Our various schemes to support first-time buyers, including the open-market shared equity programme, have helped 6,400 households buy a home, and we recently announced an additional £16 million to further expand schemes like this.

But we want to go even further and we will continue to work to meet the various ambitious housing-related targets. We will maintain the momentum generated in council house building by funding construction of 5,000 new council homes in the next parliamentary term, creating an estimated 8,000 jobs. Overall, our aim is to build over 6,000 new socially-rented houses each year.

This will be aided by the National Housing Trust, which gives councils an additional tool to help make new affordable homes available for below market rent. By levering in this additional funding, we are already helping to kickstart 'mothballed' projects and creating jobs in the construction industry, and we will expand and develop this mode.

We have also published a comprehensive strategy, *Fresh Thinking, New Ideas* which details a radically different and innovative approach to financing new house building. We are taking forward this work, for instance on developing a Scottish Housing Bond and accessing pension funds to secure additional investment. We will further develop and implement ideas such as these over the next five years.

We want Housing Associations to have greater freedom to develop renewable heat schemes within new and current developments, and will work with them to explore funding mechanisms, whereby future savings can be used to generate up-front capital, to allow an expansion of district and local heating schemes.

We will also make better use of existing housing stock which is currently lying empty. We will extend support for the Shelter Scotland Empty Homes scheme, to identify empty homes and bring them back into use. And, we will introduce a levy on long term empty houses, which will bring in £30 million of extra resources to fund further council house building.

The SNP will adopt a tenure-neutral approach – we believe a stable housing policy requires all types of tenure to thrive to reflect differing priorities that people have. In stark contrast to the decision to scrap tenancy rights in England, we will guarantee to retain secured tenancies at affordable rents. And we will implement our proposed Tenant Deposit Scheme, to help the estimated 8,000 to 11,000 Scots who have their deposit wrongly withheld.

We will make the case for Scotland to have the ability to determine its own rules on Housing Benefit, with devolution of the legislative responsibility and current budgets.

We will also offer housing health checks to ensure those in social rented accommodation are able to work out the best housing option for them. We will toughen up tenancy rules for tenants who commit anti-social behavior, as we know this is a serious issue for people all over Scotland. And we will work with the Private Rented Sector Strategy Group to create a development strategy aimed at growing and improving the private rented sector.

We must also ensure that we produce enough specialist or adapted housing for older Scots and disabled people. To this end, we will publish a national strategy on housing for older people.



In government the SNP has started an average of 117 new affordable homes every week, a total of 24,000 houses since 2007. Alex Salmond is pictured here with housing minister Alex Neil.

“Our various schemes to support first-time buyers, including the open-market shared equity programme, have helped 6,400 households buy a home, and we recently announced an additional £16 million to further expand schemes like this.”

“Crime rates are now at their lowest for 32 years.”

Justice

A visible police presence

The best way to fight crime and make our neighbourhoods safer is to have a visible police presence on our street. That is why over the last four years the SNP has put 1000 more police on the beat in Scotland.

Thanks in no small part to this increased police presence Scotland is now a safer place to live. Crime rates have fallen by a fifth since the SNP came to power and are now at their lowest level for 32 years. That means there are now 80,000 fewer crimes recorded by the police each year. Violent crime is also falling and is now at its lowest level for a quarter of a century.

Every bit as important as these statistics is the fact that studies show that fear of crime is falling in Scotland, proving that the increased police presence is making people feel safer.

We must build on this progress over the next five years. That's why we are committed to maintaining the 1000 extra police on the beat delivered in our first four years in power.

And we will ensure that these police officers are where they are most needed – out and about in our communities, not in the back office. We will achieve this through improving the way policing is organised in this country. Scotland currently has eight police forces, each with their own bureaucracy, PR departments and management. This is an unsustainable situation in the face of unprecedented Westminster cuts. In order to maintain the increased visible police presence we will reduce the number of police forces in Scotland. However, we will ensure that Scottish policing remains receptive and accountable to the varied and diverse communities that they serve.

Effective action that is reducing knife crime

We know that knife crime remains one of the gravest threats to public safety in Scotland and have acted to get knives off our streets. Knife crime has fallen by almost one third since the SNP came to power – that means more than 3000 fewer knife crimes a year.

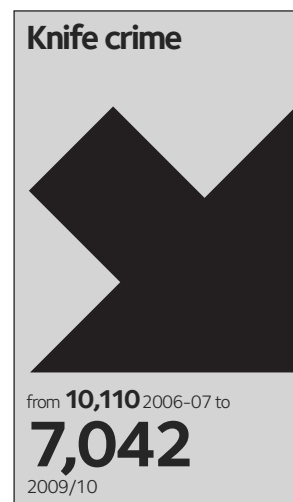
Our plans are based on proven police action that works. We have increased the use of stop and search – there were 250,000 in Strathclyde last year alone. More stop and search has meant fewer people carrying knives through fear of being caught. Those who do carry are more likely to be caught and are going to prison for longer – sentences for knife carrying are the longest in a decade.

We will extend the tried and tested methods that work in reducing knife crime. We have doubled funding for the highly-successful ‘No Knives, Better Lives’ scheme, a project that has seen a 35% drop in knife crime through raising awareness of the dangers of knife crime amongst young people, and will roll it out across the country.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

The vast majority of young people in Scotland are good citizens that we can all be proud of, and only a small number are to blame for much of the anti-social behaviour that harms our society. So we will help youngsters stay out of trouble while coming down hard on the persistent offenders.

We will extend and enhance the CashBack for Communities scheme, which has taken £40 million of the ill-gotten gains from organised crime and invested it in sport and cultural projects for young people in exactly those areas that are worst affected by crime and deprivation. To date, more than 500,000 young people have benefitted from this fund. We will reform the Proceeds of Crime Act to take even more money off criminals to re-invest in opportunities for young Scots in our communities.



Crucial to eradicating anti-social behaviour is tackling the underlying causes, in particular cheap booze. Cheap and widely available alcohol fuels a huge amount of anti-social behaviour in this country and we will, therefore, re-introduce our minimum pricing plans.

For those who do offend, we will continue to use on-the-spot fines to make sure that petty offenders cannot escape the consequences of their actions. In government, the SNP has increased the use of fixed penalty notices so that anti-social behaviour does not go unpunished. Last year alone there were 61,000 fixed penalty notices, an increase of 26%, which means swift justice for low-level offenders who may otherwise have been lost in the court system.

We will adopt a zero-tolerance approach to football-related violence and prejudice, including domestic abuse, alcohol misuse, racism and sectarianism, and we will work with the police and the wider community to clamp down on such intolerable behaviour. We will take forward the six-point plan agreed at the recent summit with Scotland's football authorities and Strathclyde police, and progress the work of the task force which is examining how to implement the six-point agreement.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence in Scotland is falling but is still far too high. We are implementing *Safer Lives: Changed Lives – a shared approach to tackling violence against women* in conjunction with our partners in local government. We will also maintain funding for Scottish Women's Aid and Rape Crisis Scotland.

At the end of last year we acted to close a loophole which made it more difficult to secure prosecutions for domestic violence incidents that happen in a private place. A new offence of ‘engaging in threatening or abusive behaviour’ has been created and we will work with the prosecutors and the police to ensure this welcome new piece of legislation also makes a positive difference for the women and men who suffer domestic violence.

We have also taken action on stalking by tightening up the law to give prosecutors greater scope to convict those who prey on unsuspecting members of the public. Those who engage in stalking or harassment via mobile phones or social networking can also now be brought to justice.

Prison and Sentencing

In government, the SNP has taken action to end the prison revolving door that sees three-quarters of prisoners re-offend within just two years of their release. We have replaced ineffective short-term sentences with tough and effective community punishments that force petty offenders to repay their debt to society through hard work in the community that they have wronged. Last year alone, petty offenders were forced to carry out 1.4 million hours of work in the community – from shifting snow to clearing up litter. The evidence shows that low level criminals who are punished in the community are far less likely to re-offend, so community punishment makes our society safer.

Instead of using prisons to give low-level offenders free bed and board for a few months, we can now use prison for keeping dangerous criminals off our streets. Under the SNP, those who commit serious crimes are going to prison for longer.

This is an approach that works. So we will build on it in the coming years. In the face of huge Tory budget cuts, we will maintain funding for Community Payback Orders so that offenders repay their debt to society through hard labour. We will work to establish the Sentencing Council, already legislated for, which will increase input from communities into sentencing.

We will address the explosion in the female prison population, which has doubled in the last decade despite the number of females committing offences staying the same. We will commission a review of female offending, including the rise in female incarceration.

We will also continue to invest in the prison estate. Despite unprecedented cuts to the Scottish capital budget by the UK Government, we will deliver HMP Low Moss and HMP Grampian as well as the second phase of HMP Shotts.

Organised Crime

Throughout our first term in office we made dealing with organised criminal gangs a priority. We have taken £40 million from organised criminals over the last four years to re-invest in the communities they have damaged. We want to take even more money off criminals, so we will seek to refine proceeds of crime legislation, at both Scottish and UK level, to increase the number of offences that this legislation covers. We will keep the legislation under constant review so that police are able to react quickly to developments in the criminal world. Currently, the UK Government keeps anything above £30 million in one year that is raised through the Act – we will open negotiations to remove this limit and allow even more money seized from criminals to be invested in our communities.

Organised gangs prey on hard-working and law-abiding businesses, using taxi firms or tanning salons as a front for their criminal activities. The SNP will not stand by and let legitimate businesses be infiltrated by thugs and criminals. So we will introduce new Serious and Organised Crime Prevention Orders to restrict the activities of those with known criminal connections, including getting involved in running a business.

Despite the big reductions in Scotland's capital budget we will deliver the Scottish Crime Campus at Gartcosh – Scotland's first serious organised crime campus. This will greatly enhance police ability to disrupt and prosecute organised criminals – for instance through a state-of-the-art forensic lab.


Supporting the Victims of Crime

The most important people in the criminal justice system are the victims. In government, the SNP has legislated to rebalance the justice system in favour of victims by giving courts more flexibility to award compensation against an offender and update compensation orders so they can reflect changes in the means of the offender. We have also provided more protection for vulnerable witnesses, including making it easier for courts to grant witnesses anonymity.


We are determined to build on this progress and ensure that the rights of victims are always the priority in our justice system. That is why we will introduce a Victims' Rights Bill. This legislation will enshrine in law a victim's right to damages and compensation. It will also give victims input into sentencing policy and parole decisions, so that those who are most affected by crime have a say in how criminals are dealt with.

We know from Victim Support Scotland that too many victims accepting compensation offers or receiving compensation orders are paid late, and for many victims receiving compensation is a drawn out and stressful affair. We will look at that situation and put in place measures to help victims get their compensation more quickly.

Victims of crime will benefit from the continuation of our important legal reforms. Early on in our period of office we reformed the law to allow the Crown the right of appeal and we have legislated to address double jeopardy. If re-elected we will seek to introduce a law of evidence of similar fact – commonly known as a ‘Bad Character’ law. This will mean that, in some of the most serious cases such as murder or rape, relevant previous convictions will be permissible as evidence.



“The best way to fight crime and make our neighbourhoods safer is to have a visible police presence on our street. That is why over the last four years the SNP has put 1000 more police on the beat in Scotland.”

 Kenny MacAskill
twitter.com/KennyMacAskill

Automatic Early Release

Over the last four years, we have made real progress towards transparency in sentencing. In the courts, the judiciary are clearer in spelling out the period that applies for custody and under licence in serious cases. The length of sentence for those committing the most serious offences has increased, improving public safety. We have also legislated for a sentencing council to help deliver more consistent and transparent sentencing.

We will build on the work already done and involve the sentencing council in further action to address unconditional early automatic release. We remain committed to ending automatic early release once the criteria set by the McLeish Commission are met. Those released on licence must be appropriately supervised for their risk and harm they pose. With Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPAs) now established to coordinate the agencies who manage offenders, we will continue to work to make our communities safer and the courts that protect them more transparent.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drug and alcohol abuse is the cause of a great deal of crime in Scotland. In office, the SNP government took bold action on both. We introduced a major new drugs strategy that shifted the emphasis in dealing with drug abusers from managing addiction to recovery. This means less reliance on methadone and more funding for treatment services that have a proven track record of successful recovery. To deliver this, we increased funding for drug treatment by 20%.

This approach has helped to achieve a fall in drug use in Scotland of almost a quarter. But far too many lives continue to be ruined by drugs. That is why we will maintain investment at 2010-11 levels in frontline drug treatment services.

Alcohol abuse is estimated to be the underlying cause of over 300,000 offences in Scotland each year. In office, the SNP has led the way in addressing the harm that alcohol inflicts on Scottish society – banning irresponsible promotions in supermarkets and introducing a social responsibility levy to ensure those who profit from the sale of alcohol also help pay for the harm it does. Opposition parties regrettably put party politics ahead of public safety by voting against minimum pricing, which was supported by the police. We will re-introduce this vital policy in the next parliament to eradicate the cheap booze that fuels so much crime in Scotland.

We will also clamp down on those adults who supply booze to kids. A legal loophole means that adults can buy alcohol for

someone under the age of 18 if the alcohol is consumed in public. This encourages outdoor drinking dens of young people, where those in the group who are over 18 buy alcohol for younger members. We will close this loophole and give the police the power they need to disrupt these drinking dens.

Firearms

We are determined to deal with gun crime in Scotland and will propose to the UK government the creation of a new Ballistics ‘DNA’ Database so each and every firearm in Scotland can be tracked. All new guns would be test-fired before being sold to record the unique marks or scratches the gun leaves on the bullet it fires. This would greatly enhance the ability of the police to track guns used in criminal activities.

We welcome proposals in the Scotland Bill to devolve competence for air weapons to the Scottish Parliament which should be used to create a licensing regime for all airguns so that only those with a legitimate reason, such as sport or pest control, will be able to own an airgun. We hope this is a first step leading to the devolution of responsibility for all firearms legislation. With complete powers we could replace the current confusing array of firearm laws with a single all-encompassing Act to provide clarity for the police and improve public safety.

Civil Justice and Legal Aid

The SNP believes that justice must be available to everyone irrespective of their wealth.

We are determined to make our civil justice system more accessible, affordable and quicker. That is why we will take forward the recommendations of the Gill Review. We will seek ways to introduce, in certain clearly defined circumstances, a form of Class Action to enable groups of small claimants to combine to seek redress through the courts – further lowering financial obstacles to justice.

In legal aid, we have already more than doubled the upper disposable income limit for financial assistance for civil legal aid to £25,000 – making more people potentially eligible for legal aid. However, in the face of UK Government cuts, providing legal representation for our most vulnerable will be a challenge. We will ensure that legal aid is available to those who need it most, and we will discuss with stakeholders and the wider public how best to target resources.

The decision of the UK Supreme Court to overrule seven senior Scottish judges in the Scottish Criminal Appeals Court in the Cadder case with regard to police detention and questioning has

had a far-reaching impact on the Scottish legal system. In the aftermath of this decision, the SNP government took the swift action necessary to ensure that our criminal legal practices complied with ECHR, and we tasked Lord Carloway, a senior High Court judge, to examine the wider implications for our justice system.

Going forward, we will demand the same rights for Scots law in relation to the ECHR as enjoyed by other jurisdictions. And we will protect the independence of Scots law by continuing our efforts to ensure that the High Court of Justiciary remains as the ultimate court of criminal appeal in Scotland – not the UK Supreme Court.

Damages

We will reform the law of damages. Building on the work of the Scottish Law Commission, we will consolidate and update the existing legislation to bring it into the 21st century, under a single new Act. This will bring real benefits to many people denied justice, such as those suffering from asbestos-related conditions, a group we have already supported in Government by ensuring they have a legal right to redress.

Sexual Offences

Crimes of a sexual nature are particularly detestable. The low rate of conviction in rape cases in this country is a matter of grave concern for us all. That is why the SNP took action in office to improve the conviction rate through clarifying the law in relation to consent and toughening up rape and sexual offences law.

And we will do more to ensure those guilty of rape are brought to justice. We will legislate so that judges will direct juries not to take into account any delay in reporting a rape or any apparent lack of resistance from the victim when reaching their decision. This will remove two of the largest obstacles to securing conviction in a rape case.

Fire Service

The SNP believes there is a strong case for a single fire service in Scotland, a view widely shared by those involved in Fire and Rescue, including the Fire Brigades Union. Alternative proposals such as enhanced collaboration, or regional services do not achieve the same financial savings, improved accountability or enhanced service. In order to protect frontline fire services, we will, therefore, move toward a single fire service over the next parliamentary term.

Our People

Getting married There were plenty of SNP weddings. Here are just two:



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1. Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and SNP Chief Executive Peter Murrell got married in Glasgow in July 2010.

2. Aileen Campbell – who became Scotland's youngest MSP in 2007 – married Fraser White in Perthshire in September 2009.

3. Shirley-Anne Somerville was one of three SNP MSPs who became a new mum during the last parliamentary term. Her daughter Niamh was born in July 2008.

4. Scotland's Finance Secretary, John Swinney became a dad again, just weeks before delivering his fourth draft Budget to the Scottish Parliament. Son Matthew was born in October 2010 in Dundee's Ninewells Hospital and weighed in at 7lbs 9oz.

New arrivals



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5. Alex Salmond was elected First Minister of Scotland by MSPs following an historic election win in May 2007.

6. Long-serving SNP parliamentarians (l-r) Andrew Welsh, Jim Mather and Alasdair Morgan stood down from Holyrood at this election.

7. Keith Brown joined the Scottish Government in February 2009. He saw active service during the Falklands War and is a powerful advocate for Scotland's veterans in government.

8. Dundee's Joe Fitzpatrick, Shona Robison and Stewart Hosie join the Relay for Life.

9. Sir Sean Connery unveils a bronze bust of Winnie Ewing to recognise her outstanding contribution to Scottish politics and record her place as one of the most influential Scots of her generation.

10. John Mason pulled off a stunning by-election victory in Glasgow by winning one of Labour's safest seats in July 2008.

A great deal has happened for the SNP over these past four years. And not just in parliament or in government. These are just some of the more personal events that have shaped our people and our party since 2007.

Friends lost The SNP also lost some well loved figures over these past four years. These include:



**Bashir Ahmad MSP,
1940-2009**

"Bashir was a man of enormous grace and respect, who brought the dignity of his faith to the very centre of our democratic process. Bashir made history by being the first Scots Asian MSP therefore giving the Scottish Parliament something indefinable. He made it representative of the whole country for the first time. He was the kindest, most decent human being it has ever been my pleasure to meet."
First Minister Alex Salmond



**Professor Sir Neil MacCormick,
1941-2009**

"Neil was passionately committed to his party and the cause of Scottish independence. Yet his approach was always inclusive, and he strongly believed in advancing Scotland's case by building alliances, and indeed friendships, beyond those of party. Neil was a hugely distinguished academic, an outstanding ambassador for Scotland as a Euro-MP, but above all a fine human being."
First Minister Alex Salmond



**Jimmy Reid,
1932-2010**

"Jimmy Reid was Clyde-built. He has been Scotland's great rallying figure over the last four decades and was one of the few Scottish political figures who can genuinely say that they provoked real change for the better in society - always addressing both a Scottish and international audience. Above all, Jimmy was a warm, humorous and generous human being."
First Minister Alex Salmond



**Billy Wolfe,
1924 - 2010**

"Billy Wolfe was incredibly influential in developing the social democratic ethos of the SNP - something which was vital in the success we enjoy today. Billy was committed to public life and the causes he believed in - working with others, for example, in the campaign for nuclear disarmament - and he will be greatly missed both within and outwith the ranks of the Scottish National Party."
First Minister Alex Salmond

Scotland at our heart



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Early Years

“We know that supporting children in their earliest years gives them opportunities for learning and development that make a huge difference for the rest of their lives.”

We know that supporting children in their earliest years gives them opportunities for learning and development that make a huge difference for the rest of their lives.

At the heart of our plans for early years is a fundamental shift in philosophy and approach. It is a shift from intervening only when a crisis happens, to prevention and early intervention. That means providing a supportive environment for children and the earliest possible identification of any help that may be required.

In our first four years, we have increased free nursery provision by almost 20%, benefitting 100,000 children. We've reformed and improved the way child protection services work, invested in parenting programmes and developed a national consensus that early intervention is the right strategy to help our youngest and most vulnerable get the best start in life.

We have backed this approach with substantial investment and next year, as we continue the implementation of our Early Years Framework, the budget includes £45 million of investment in the most vulnerable children and young people.

In the next Parliament, we will go further. As part of the new Scottish Futures Fund we will invest an additional £50 million in a change fund to support projects designed to deliver effective early intervention in a child's life, including the development of a new generation of Children and Family Centres across Scotland. And, we will combine this funding with our existing £6.8 million Early Years and Early Action Fund, to create an additional strand designed to help improve early years services including parenting, play, childcare, child and maternal health and family support, with the aim of helping parents and communities build better lives for themselves and their children.

To ensure this investment is delivered in every part of Scotland, we will put the early years approach on a new footing and we will ensure that the commitment of every council to this agenda is reflected in every Single Outcome Agreement. What's more, we will review the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to bring it up



to date and we will introduce new legislation that creates an obligation on councils, the health service and government to deliver early years services and to see early years education as an essential part of the learning journey.

That legislation will ensure that the Getting It Right For Every Child approach is developed nationwide. This will enshrine in law a duty for health boards, councils and other agencies to work together irrespective of bureaucratic boundaries and place the child at the centre of how they deliver services.

Taking into account the messages from the review of the early years undertaken for the Scottish Government by former Health Minister, Susan Deacon, our legislation will end the postcode lottery of services across Scotland. We will focus initial efforts on those from the most deprived backgrounds and ensure all get access to pre-school teachers and that the expansion of nursery education continues. And, because we recognise that many of the problems lie at home, families who need it will get help with parenting and access to high quality childcare.

We will build on our successful campaign to support parenting skills and encourage parents to 'play talk and read' to their children every day to give them the best start in life. An early priority for a new SNP government will be the development of a National Parenting Strategy that encourages agencies to work together to support new parents and allow them to develop their parenting skills. Parents will have access to a guaranteed level of support across the country.

We recognise that one of the biggest barriers to changing the circumstances of a family is childcare. That's why we will put Childcare for All at the centre of our ambition for families in Scotland, because we understand how difficult it can be to balance the demands of work and family. We will set out the steps we need to take to increase childcare support here in Scotland to match the best elsewhere in Europe. Improving childcare and reducing the costs will also help those parents

who otherwise would find it impossible to work. This is a goal that we will set for our nation, so that over the next decade we can take clear and well understood steps towards achieving this important ambition for Scotland's working families.

As part of this drive to support families, we will also convene a national summit with Scotland's business community to explore new ways of incentivising and encouraging more flexible working, to make it easier for parents with young children. And we will create a task force across government that has as its objective the co-ordination of policy to ensure that early years spending is prioritised by the whole public sector.

We know that our life chances begin to be determined before we are born, and are shaped before children enter the formal education system at age 3. The arguments, economic as well as social, for investment in the early years, are well researched. If we want to tackle inequality in Scotland and break the cycle of poverty, poor health and poor attainment, we need to continue to transform Scotland's approach to the early years.

Schools

There is work to do to give young Scots an even better education.

I have spent a good part of my political career engaged with education and, as the son of two teachers, I have lived with education longer than that. Like many of you I have experienced education as a parent and so share your passion for the best possible education. I know the importance of learning for each individual young Scot and for our nation.

Since being appointed Scotland's Education Secretary, I have been, quite deliberately, listening to parents, pupils, teachers, respected experts and also to the views of other politicians, of all parties, in our parliament and in our council chambers. And given my wife is a headteacher, I have definitely been listening to headteachers too. I have looked at the best Scotland has to offer – and there is much that is very good. I have seen the strongest and most successful systems internationally – and from these, there is much we can learn.

These experiences tell me two things. First that while Scottish education has undoubted strengths, in too many ways it is just 'good enough'. And, that cannot be the standard we set ourselves. 'Good enough' is no longer good enough if Scotland is to meet the needs of our pupils, the aspirations of our parents and build a more successful nation now and for the future. And second, from everyone, I hear a passion for education and particularly school-based education. That passion is the greatest cause for hope in Scotland today.

We already have, across our country, the enthusiasm, the aspiration and the ambition to guarantee excellence in our education system. And, with the Curriculum for Excellence, we are turning that passion into the higher attainment, improved outcomes for our children, that we all seek.

Michael Russell

Stability in our Schools

We will provide stability in our classrooms. As a nation we have agreed the reforms that are required and it is now about the successful implementation and delivery of those improvements through the Curriculum for Excellence. The SNP will, therefore, focus on building and completing the roll out of CfE, providing the support teachers and schools need to make it real from 0 - 18 and beyond, including continuing professional development.

Continuous Improvement in Educational Attainment

The most recent figures from the respected survey of international education performance, PISA 2009, show that the decline in Scotland's educational performance has been halted. After a period of drift since devolution, the first assessment under an SNP government shows that the tide has turned, with Scottish pupils performing above the international average in reading and science, at the international average in maths and at the same level as in England and Northern Ireland and better than Wales. We are determined to see an increased performance in the next PISA survey.

Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence will deliver the connected, balanced and flexible approach which we need and it will free our teachers to teach. It will make teaching more enjoyable for those who do it, and those who benefit from it. And like all positive change, the more it is embraced, the more good it will do. We will enable our teachers and schools to deliver new

“The most telling remark about CfE is not from a politician or educationalist – but from a group of pupils. When my colleague, Keith Brown met S6 pupils at Dunblane High School a few months ago they told him that they wished they were being taught in the same way as the new S1s at the school. That should tell us all we need to know about the opportunities our new curriculum offers for pupils and for Scotland.”

learning through the Curriculum for Excellence, making it the cornerstone of education, providing the educational route from the earliest years through school to college, university and beyond. This will equip all our young people for life, work, leisure and further learning in the modern world.

The Curriculum for Excellence will have at its core a new emphasis on literacy and numeracy so we get the basics right from the early years. And we will work to improve outcomes and deliver a more flexible and personal learning experience for every child. Scotland's ambition should be to eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy and the actions we take over these next five years will be focused on delivering significant progress towards this goal.

Ultimately, our new curriculum will nurture young people as successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. And, like the best education systems in the world, it will focus on quality of the teaching, which requires investment in teachers, and on the quality of the resources available, which is why we will continue to support the world-leading schools intranet and the new Online National Assessment Resource.

A New Generation of National Qualifications

New and refreshed qualifications, building on what we have, will be available from 2013-14 onwards to meet the needs of the first group of young people to have benefited from the new curriculum. We will ensure the successful delivery of these new qualifications, on time and on budget.

Smaller Class Sizes in Early Years

Smaller classes help improve the quality of the pupil teacher interaction which in turn leads to improved learning. Over these past four years class sizes in our primary schools have got smaller. They are now at record low levels. Progress has been made and there is more work to do. And, smaller class sizes – particularly in Primaries 1-3 and in the areas of greatest deprivation – are worth working for.

With local government we will look first to maintain the recent improvement before continuing with progressive reductions in class sizes and improved pupil-teacher ratios. And, in doing so we will also support initiatives such as nurture groups which are showing good results for many pupils.

From August this year there will be a new legal limit of 25 on class sizes in Primary 1. And over the next five years we will bring together the complex guidance and legislation on class sizes to deliver a coherent system in Scotland's schools to support progressive reductions in the youngest years.

Supporting our Teachers

We have introduced the McCormac Review into the 2001 McCrone agreement to see whether, 10 years on, that deal is delivering all the benefits that were intended for both teachers and pupils, is suited to the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence, attracts the most-talented people into the teaching profession and promotes strong leadership. The review will also examine the cost and size of the teacher workforce in the context of the current financial climate. We will carefully assess the recommendations made in the review and working in partnership will take forward those that we believe will deliver improvements in Scottish education.

We will also work with the profession and other partners to take forward the recommendations of the Donaldson Review, Teaching Scotland's Future. Our aim is to equip teachers with

the skills and continuous professional development they need. We believe many of the recommendations, for example, on hub schools, the incorporation of Masters level credits into ongoing professional development and increased quality assurance, will provide a new direction and improved outcomes.

After a difficult period for teacher employment, in part caused by decisions by some local authorities to reduce teacher numbers rather than prioritise smaller classes, we have now reached agreement with local government to deliver sufficient teaching posts for all probationers who successfully complete their probation in summer 2011, and a place for all probationer teachers who require one under the induction scheme in August 2011. We now have the lowest teacher unemployment in the UK and are committed to reducing it further.

Ensuring the Highest Quality in Education

We will ensure the successful creation of the new Scottish Education Quality and Improvement Agency, which will bring the work of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland together in one place. This new agency will improve the efficiency of the national bodies supporting education. It will be responsible for driving forward innovation in education by promoting best practice and providing support, resources and feedback based on inspections.

This quality and improvement body will be charged with leading the drive to complete the implementation of the new curriculum, improving our school education and encouraging innovation in our classrooms. It will do this with less bureaucracy, less red tape and with more resources freed to go to the frontline.

Minimising the Barriers to Education

We will keep the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). We will also work to ensure the EMA takes account of the needs of young carers, with more flexibility to recognise the particular pressures that some youngsters face balancing school and caring responsibilities.

We are also proud of our action to extend free school meals and in time will look at ways of expanding current provision. We will also look to work with local authorities to identify other steps we can take in the future, when there is less pressure on education budgets, to improve support for low income families to help meet the costs associated with school, for example school uniforms and school trips.

Schools for the Future

We have already delivered 330 new and refurbished schools in the last four years – more than our predecessors. We will now take forward our £1.25 billion investment in new schools, with projects in every local authority area in Scotland. We are determined to replace or refurbish the worst condition schools in Scotland and will develop a new, third phase of school building to ensure an ongoing pipeline of new projects.



We halved the number of children in unsuitable buildings during our first term – we will do the same during our second, getting it down to a level where such buildings can be completely eliminated within a further five years. That will have undone the harm done over several generations by the Tory and Labour governments that neglected school maintenance and failed to replace crumbling buildings.

Working with the Scottish Futures Trust we will also look at ways of delivering greener schools, both in terms of construction and design. And we will work to ensure Scotland maintains its lead position on information and communication technology in our schools.

School Governance

The delivery of modern education and the realities of the more flexible curriculum demand a modern approach, based on the strong Scottish tradition of local accountability. We have already reviewed how budgets are managed, giving more power to schools. We will take this further, building on clusters of schools and reviewing the balance of power between government, local authorities and on-the-ground delivery. We will devolve further funding and ensure greater autonomy for learning communities.

The teaching unions have already indicated their support for change and many other bodies and individuals in education realise that the time is right for taking steps which ensure that education improves. This is important in order to ensure educational delivery is local, accountable, efficient, cost-effective and constantly improving. However any changes in governance must have better outcomes for our pupils as their end point and must also guarantee the present diversity of the system.

Protecting Rural Schools

The SNP Government's Schools Consultation Act has already been used to ensure fair treatment for rural communities threatened by school closures. However the legislation could be improved and new guidelines are needed. There needs to be a national means of assessing capacity and a national approach to imaginative delivery of rural education.

Accordingly we intend to amend the Act to strengthen the rights of communities and to ensure that consultation is genuine and based on accurate information. There will be a strong presumption against closure and revised means of supporting rural delivery.

Improving the Learning Environment

Rural education will also feature in a wideranging Education Rights and Responsibilities Bill. Our intention is to set out in law what pupils and parents can expect from the learning journey through the Scottish education system. It will also make clear what schools should expect in return and how we can build stronger partnerships between schools, young people and parents.

We want our pupils to feel safe in school and will look to partners across education to deliver a renewed focus on anti-bullying initiatives, building on best practice. This will include efforts to tackle homophobic bullying in our schools.

We welcome proposals for the creation of One Planet schools, and will look at ways of developing this concept. This will include action to continue the development of professional standards around sustainability education and leadership within our schools on environmental issues. We want to build on the success of the Climate Challenge Fund, an initiative that is enabling communities to lower their carbon footprint. We will, therefore develop a new strand of the fund, a Junior Climate Challenge Fund, to support specific actions by young people in their communities.

We are determined to broaden the learning experience for young Scots and as part of this will encourage pupils and schools to make full use of our network of public libraries, and their staff. And, we welcome some of the more creative initiatives already taking place in Scottish education, for example the teaching of philosophy in schools.

Modern Languages and Scottish Studies

We will introduce a norm for language learning based on the European Union 1+2 model – that is we will create the conditions in which every child will learn two languages in addition to their own mother tongue. This will be rolled out over two Parliaments, and will create a new model for language acquisition in Scotland.

At the same time we will develop the concept of "Scottish Studies" in our schools, creating a distinct strand of learning focused on Scotland and incorporating Scottish History, Scottish Literature, the Scots and Gaelic Languages, wider Scottish culture and Scottish current affairs. All pupils will have access to this strand at Primary and Secondary levels. We will also continue to support the expansion of Gaelic medium education and will examine how we can introduce an entitlement to Gaelic medium education where reasonable demand exists.

Technology

We will complete the roll out of Glow, the world's first national intranet for schools. Underpinning Glow is our investment in Interconnect 2.0 – the high-speed education broadband infrastructure linking all 32 local authorities and key educational sites. This will enable our students and teachers to be amongst the early beneficiaries of next generation broadband. We have started developing a Technologies for Learning strategy. An integral part of this strategy will be introducing the next generation of Glow by September 2012.

Literacy

The SNP government produced the first Literacy Action Plan since devolution – a clear route map for assisting those Scots who have problems with reading and writing. Literacy is already a core objective of Curriculum for Excellence and for the first time young people will have their literacy checked and assisted at every stage in school, starting with an early assessment to pick up on learning difficulties. We will ensure that the Standing Commission on Literacy will focus on helping young people to acquire the skills they need for life.

Dyslexia

We have passed new legislation to ensure children's needs are properly assessed and local authorities obliged to provide the help they require. We have also made recognition of dyslexia and appropriate teaching of pupils with dyslexia an integral part of teacher training and ongoing education. We will now work to ensure effective delivery of these actions.

Additional Support for Learning

We will work to ensure the successful implementation of the new Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2009 which came into force at the end of 2010. It will ensure that children and young people with additional support needs and their parents can make out-of-area placing requests for specific schools and receive mediation and dispute resolution help following such requests. It will also increase parents' access to the Additional Support Needs Tribunals for Scotland (ASNTS) if a placing request is refused.

Barnardo's Scotland, in partnership with the Scottish Child Law Centre, has been awarded the contract to provide free lay and legal advice to families and young people who appeal to the ASNTS against education authorities' decisions regarding the provision of educational support, such as out-of-area placing requests. Through actions like this, over these next five years we will work to ensure the words of the legislation are reflected in real improvements for the children with additional support needs and their parents. That will also require a simplification of access to advice and information.

Child Protection

We will take forward action to build on new national child protection guidance issued in December 2010. This will include revision of the 'pink book' – specific children protection guidance for health professionals – to bring this into line with the new national child protection guidance for Scotland. We will develop new guidance for children with disabilities, who are at a much higher risk of abuse, and a national risk assessment toolkit for professionals working in children protection to promote common practices and consistency across agencies.

We will also examine the training needs of child protection professionals across all services and will start to develop a national competency framework. This will set out a common set of skills and standards for these professionals to ensure the delivery of a consistently-high standard of support to children across the country. Our aim is to strengthen the skills and training of professionals and improve the advice and tools available to them in assessing, managing and minimising risks faced by some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

We will also implement the second phase of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme.



“The SNP believes that educational opportunity should be based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. I am determined to protect that principle.”

Colleges and Universities

University Funding

The SNP believes Scottish Higher Education should be free. We have worked as a government towards ensuring that aim for the long term, through our comprehensive and exhaustive Green Paper process. In partnership with Universities Scotland we have set out the policy options and identified the funding requirement resulting from the funding arrangements in England. Based on the most realistic estimates for top-up fees down south, and including charges for students outwith Scotland, we believe the potential additional funding required for Scotland is £93 million.

That can be filled by a range of actions including a new management fee to be paid by EU students, greater efficiencies by universities, increased commercial activity and increased philanthropy. What remains will be filled by government funds, ensuring that our Higher Education sector remains internationally competitive and truly excellent in world terms.

We will work with our universities to deliver new pathways from school into 2nd year degree courses including through the Scottish Baccalaureate. We will also modernise university governance whilst retaining the important accountability that is the hallmark of the Scottish Democratic Intellect. A new Higher Education Bill will establish a sustainable and secure long term settlement for the sector.

We have reached agreement with our universities and colleges to maintain student numbers in the year ahead and will maintain this throughout the next Parliament.

The Future of our Colleges

We will produce a Green Paper on Colleges setting out options for the future of the sector. We would like to see a simpler more outcome-focused approach to Further Education funding to minimise bureaucracy and increase flexibility, as we have achieved with Higher Education in recent years. We strongly believe in collective bargaining in the sector, with a national set of terms and conditions for staff, and in the creation of a “map” of provision which allows colleges to avoid wasteful duplication and overlap. We wish to protect the local and regional nature of Scotland’s colleges whilst ensuring that they are accountable and efficient stewards of national resources.

Our infrastructure investment will deliver improvements to Kilmarnock College and Inverness College and we will also support the modernisation of Glasgow’s college estate following completion of a satisfactory business case.

We will continue to encourage moves to enable articulation from college to university and support the expansion of school-college partnerships. We will also enhance the role of colleges in delivering Higher Education opportunities.

Contribution to the Economy

The Scottish Higher and Further Education sector is a significant business in its own right. We will continue to support the sector as a key sector within our economic strategy. And we will protect the Scottish Funding Council’s research excellence grant in cash terms in academic year 2011-12.

Student Support

Since 2007 we have taken some important steps to support Scotland’s students. We’ve abolished the Graduate Endowment Fee – a back door tuition fee – which saves 50,000 students £2,300 when they graduate. And we’ve delivered a £30 million boost to student incomes with the introduction of:

- a £1,000 grant for “independent” students
- an increase of £442 in the basic student loan, benefiting 75,000 students, and
- an additional £180 on top of that for those from the lowest income background.

Our package also saw a £2 million increase in support for childcare and, for the first time, over-55s are now able to access state support for their education. And we have also replaced loans for part-time students with grants and extended grants to part-time vocational postgraduates for the first time.

In the most recent Scottish Budget we provided an additional £15 million for college bursaries and funding to support 1,200 additional college places. We are committed to protecting existing students’ living costs through our budget for 2011-12.

For the future, we will protect the advances already made. We will continue with increased support for college bursaries, allowing us to provide 50,000 a year for each of the next five years. As we set out elsewhere we will also keep the Education Maintenance Allowance.

We will take forward proposals to extend the Council Tax exemption to include articulating students, so that those who are moving, for example, directly from an undergraduate to a post-graduate course will not pay Council Tax in the short period between courses.

We will also look to develop Scottish Science and Engineering Bursaries, with government match funding contributions from the private sector to enable us to create fifty £5,000 bursaries for young Scots looking to advance in science and engineering. We will ensure the bursary programme supports efforts to widen access and draw more young Scots into science and engineering. We will also provide HE/FE scholarships for the children of servicemen and women killed while on active duty.

We also believe that more opportunities should exist within Scotland for graduates and will encourage graduate recruiters to set up more graduate programmes in Scotland.

In our legislation for Higher Education we will set achievable but ambitious goals for access to Higher Education for the poorest students, and we will start on the task of setting a minimum student income which should in time equate to around £7,000.

Communities

Our Vision for Stronger Communities

Strong and vibrant communities are at the very heart of a more successful Scotland. The SNP's vision is of city neighbourhoods, towns and villages where people are empowered to make their life better. And where government is doing its bit to make life easier, safer and our communities more pleasant places to live, work and bring up a family.

We want to see a fairer deal for people across Scotland. That's why, working with local government, we will freeze the Council Tax throughout the next Parliament. Over the period of the next Parliament we will consult with others to produce a fairer system based on ability to pay to replace the Council Tax. We will put this to the people at the next election, by which time Scotland will have more powers over income tax.

Scotland faces many challenges; nevertheless, over these past four years progress has been made. There is of course much more to do. The SNP in government will bring together activity on the economy, the third sector, transport, community safety, housing, the environment and regeneration. This will deliver a step change in support for you and your local area.

Funding Regeneration

The biggest challenge in the years ahead will be financial. The SNP government has recently launched a wide-ranging consultation on how we can fund future regeneration at a time when budgets are being squeezed ever further by Westminster.

In the meantime, we are leveraging funding in from a wide variety of sources. The £50 million JESSICA fund – which will commence this year – is attracting money from the European Investment Bank and is being used for urban regeneration.

We will also take forward a new way to invest in community projects and community well-being called Social Impact Bonds. These will offer a form of public-social partnership, allowing for big upfront investment in projects that will deliver real benefits, and have been successfully piloted in Peterborough. We will identify and commence three projects through which we can pilot Social Impact Bonds. We will consult with Scotland's communities and our social partners to choose the best projects.

In the next five years we will work as Scotland's government to expand social and charity banking and micro-finance in Scotland. This will strengthen communities and support local businesses.

And we will look to integrate funding streams more effectively. We will take forward a pilot project to allow communities to submit proposals for local transformation that encompass a range of potential funders and will work with funders to develop mechanisms for more effective multi-agency response.

Community Benefit Clauses

The SNP has played a leading role in developing new ways to deliver added social benefits, including training and recruitment of young people, through procurement. In February 2008 the SNP government issued guidelines on the use of Community Benefit Clauses in public procurement.

We want to see this approach developed across the wider public sector and will introduce a Sustainable Procurement Bill to make clear the legislative framework for procurement decisions and support the greater use of social and environmental benefit clauses. Community benefit has been embedded in a range of projects including the Commonwealth Games contracts, the new Southern General Hospital project

and Scottish Government contracts for the Energy Assistance Programme (EAP) and construction of the Scottish Crime Campus in North Lanarkshire.

Empowering Scotland's People and Communities

In our first four years we have transformed the relationship between central and local government. Local councils have been given unprecedented flexibility and financial freedom to pursue local objectives. We now want to go further and empower Scotland's people and communities.

We propose a Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill, which will make it easier for communities to take over underused or unused public sector assets, and include measures to enable communities to deal more effectively with derelict or unused property in their area. This will act as a catalyst for a wide range of community activities and enterprises.

We want to give Scotland's Community Councils greater relevance and more opportunities to make a difference for the areas they represent. And, we will also encourage the expansion of community radio in Scotland.

Community Benefit from Renewables

Scotland must secure the benefits from the country's vast renewable energy resources. We have recently consulted on how the development of renewable and low-carbon energy can be supported, while ensuring that Scotland and its local communities enjoy long-term returns from the assets on their door step. We are determined to deliver a system that is simpler for developers and communities and which encourages the growth of the sector.

Our proposals will seek to boost investment now so that the whole nation can enjoy the benefits of that investment in the future as the offshore renewables sector moves to profitability, as it will. As a starting point, we wish to see the Scottish Parliament take on responsibility for the Crown Estate Commission so that the resources generated in Scotland can be used to support the development of the offshore renewable sector and in time be re-invested in Scotland's communities. We will ensure that renewable energy projects developed on public land are leaders in the provision of community benefit.

Our plans will also include proposals to establish a Future Generations Fund so that our energy wealth provides benefits not only for today but for Scotland into the future. As we have seen from examples in numerous countries around the world, such a fund provides protection in times of economic difficulty and real financial security into the future.

Community Development of Renewables

We will continue to support the expansion of community renewables and will look to move to a self-financing scheme based on a new support system that transfers grants to loans for those projects that are successful. This will enable these communities to share their success with others, and further expand community renewables provision.

We will also encourage and support Housing Associations in their development of renewable capacity including renewable heat. We will ask the Scottish Futures Trust to develop a national financing model for renewable heat schemes. And we will also encourage the development of mutualised local energy companies.

“Strong and vibrant communities are at the very heart of a more successful Scotland.”

We will take forward our proposal for an effective public engagement strategy so as a nation we can work together to drive forward Scotland's transition to a low-carbon society.

Scotland's Military Communities

We stand shoulder to shoulder with the communities in Scotland campaigning to save their military bases from closure. As Scotland's government we will press the UK government to keep both RAF Leuchars and RAF Lossiemouth open, and to protect Scotland's army units.

In government the SNP will continue to give high priority to policies for Scotland's veterans, reflecting the debt society owes to our ex-service community.

National Resilience Week

We want to ensure our communities are prepared for and ready to withstand serious or crisis events. We will, therefore, continue our efforts to promote community and national resilience and work with the British Red Cross to take forward their proposal for a national Resilience Week in Scotland.

Volunteering

We recognise the contribution volunteering makes to stronger communities and to the delivery of services to people across Scotland. We will continue to support Scotland's volunteers and look to encourage more Scots – young and old – to become involved in volunteering.

Action on Litter

One issue that people continually raise with us on the doorsteps is litter. Dirty streets not only cost tens of millions of pounds to clean up every year, they also hurt civic pride and give the impression that an area is run down. There are many successful initiatives from both home and abroad – such as the Adopt a Highway initiative from the USA, Street Champions from England or Helsinki's Spring Clean Festivals – which bring together communities and volunteers alongside the public sector. We will provide leadership on this issue and seek to promote schemes which are shown to work, bringing both economic and environmental benefits.

High Hedges

The SNP will also act on an issue that has a severe impact on a number of people in Scotland. Disputes over high hedges strain relationships between neighbours and our communities suffer as a result. In office, we carried out in-depth consultation on this issue and possible remedies. There was overwhelming support for a legislative solution, and if re-elected we will act on this desire and introduce a Bill to provide a legal framework for settling disputes related to high hedges.



Independence

“No one cares more about Scotland’s success than the people who live here and that, ultimately, is why independence is the best choice for our future.”

Independence is about making Scotland more successful. At its most basic, it is the ability to take our own decisions, in the same way as other countries. Scotland is a society and a nation. No one cares more about Scotland’s success than the people who live here and that, ultimately, is why independence is the best choice for our future.

With independence we can work together to make Scotland a more ambitious and dynamic country. We will be able to create an environment where our existing and new private industries can grow more easily. We will have the economic levers to create new jobs and take full advantage of our second, green energy windfall. And instead of many young people having to leave Scotland to fulfil their ambitions they will be able to stay and take advantage of the increased opportunities here. We will be able to address the priorities of people in Scotland, from better state pensions to universal free childcare. Scotland could do even more to lead the world in areas like renewable energy and tackling climate change, and play our part in creating a more peaceful and stable world. Independence will allow us to make Scotland a better place to live.

And independence will mean a strong, new relationship between Scotland and the rest of the UK. It will create a partnership of equals – a social union to replace the current political union. As members of the EU there will continue to be open borders, shared rights, free trade and extensive cooperation. The big difference will be that instead of only deciding some issues here

in Scotland, independence will allow us to take decisions on all the major issues. That is the reality of independence in this interdependent world.

What’s Your Ambition for Scotland?

We asked people to tell us why they support independence – to set out the ways Scotland can be better as an independent country. Here are some of their reasons:

- higher levels of economic growth and more jobs
- working to end child and pensioner poverty
- moving to universal free childcare to match the best in Europe
- increasing life expectancy and reducing health inequalities
- speeding up the delivery of a Scottish high-speed rail network
- becoming Europe’s green energy powerhouse
- focusing more on Scotland’s engineering and manufacturing industries
- delivering a carbon-neutral Scotland
- making Scotland an international centre for science and innovation
- contributing to international peace-keeping and peace-building not illegal wars
- freeing Scotland from nuclear weapons

Trusting the People to Decide

Independence will only happen when people in Scotland vote for it. That is why independence is your choice.

We think the people of Scotland should decide our nation’s future in a democratic referendum and opinion polls suggest that most Scots agree. We will, therefore, bring forward our Referendum Bill in this next Parliament.

A yes vote will mean Scotland becomes an independent nation and we can then begin the job of delivering the better country we all know Scotland can be. Independence is enjoyed by nations around the world. That same independence can be enjoyed by Scotland too, with the benefits felt by each and everyone of us.

Making the Scotland Bill Better with Full Financial Responsibility

This election gives you the opportunity to secure a better deal for Scotland in two ways. As we have seen, with your support we can take forward our proposals for a referendum, and we can also, in the meantime, make the current Scotland Bill better.

The Scotland Bill does not contain any measure to create jobs in Scotland and does nothing to protect us from the worst of the Tory cuts. With your help in this election we can make sure the Scotland Bill is improved. We now know that financial responsibility, and indeed independence, for Scotland will allow us to deliver higher levels of economic growth. And that means we can protect more of the things that matter. Instead of a dismal decade of Westminster cuts, we can choose this better way.

Our plan would see all tax raised in Scotland kept in Scotland. Instead of the Tory government in London deciding how much of our income we get to keep, the Scottish Parliament would make a payment for Scotland’s share of ongoing UK services such as pensions, foreign affairs and defence.

The Scottish Parliament has responsibility for the health service and that means we can protect NHS budgets. We have responsibility for universities and that means we can protect our students and graduates from Tory tuition fees plans. And if we take on responsibility for tax and for welfare we can also better protect Scotland from Tory cuts. We can protect families, and protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

The Ability to Do More

Responsibility for Corporation Tax would allow Scotland to do even more to create jobs and make our economy more competitive and successful. SNP victory in this election will send a clear message to the UK government that Scotland should take responsibility for this tax. The UK government is currently considering Corporation Tax devolution for Northern Ireland and we will press the case for Scotland too. As part of this we will publish our own consultation paper by the summer on the most appropriate arrangements for this tax in Scotland including questions on the lower rate needed to maximise the economic benefit for our nation.

We also believe Scotland can achieve more with responsibility for Excise Duty and the Crown Estate Commission. Through Excise Duty we will have the ability to deliver a fair deal for Scotland’s whisky producers by ending the current discriminatory tax regime. And with responsibility for the Crown Estate Commission we can do more to maximise the benefits to Scotland’s communities of our offshore renewable energy wealth.



Angela Constance on Independence

When you get paid at the end of the month you don’t give that money to your next door neighbours and let them decide what you can spend. At home you and your family are responsible for your own priorities and your own choices. But as a nation we currently let other people make those decisions for us.

In all parts of life people aspire to independence. Our young people want the freedom to make their own decisions, just as many pensioners relish keeping their independence as they get older. We value independent investigations, we want our courts and police to be independent, many people aspire to leave jobs in big companies to go independent as their own boss.

At the heart of this is the natural desire to take responsibility for our own actions. Independence for our nation is not the answer to every concern you will have about the community and country you live in, but it does mean that we all work together for the answer. Independence is about a lot of things, but for me, at its heart, it is about choices. About having the ability to speak up for our own community, and to see the decisions Scotland takes, acted upon. And that choice – that independence – is a very precious thing.

Scotland's Place in the World

“We want the world to see Scotland as a great place to visit and a great place to invest.”

We want the world to see Scotland as a great place to visit and a great place to invest. We have ambitious plans for international activity, with a particular focus on increasing exports, tourism and economic growth as we set out elsewhere in this manifesto.

We will work with the National Companies and Collections bringing together, where we can, National Company tours, museum and gallery loans and trade missions for an ‘all Scotland’ approach to cultural and economic promotion. And we will recognise those Scots who play such an important role as the ‘face of Scotland’. Our Ambassadors for Scotland Awards will identify and reward excellence among those who present Scotland’s public image to visitors and to the world, from the tourist industry here at home to overseas trade promotion.

International Justice and Peace

We want Scotland to be seen as a voice for peace and justice in the world. We will continue to support the work of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his efforts through the Nuclear Weapons Convention to eradicate nuclear, chemical and biological weapons across the planet. Our opposition to the Trident nuclear missile system and its planned replacement remains firm – there is no place for these weapons in Scotland and we will continue to press the UK government to scrap Trident and cancel its replacement.

Scotland has responsibilities in the wider world and so we will continue and protect our current level of investment in international development. We are proud of the work undertaken through our International Development Fund. It is making a difference to the lives of many people across the world. We will also work to ensure Scotland becomes a Fair Trade nation.

Scottish Water already plays an active role in Scotland’s international development efforts by supporting WaterAid to help provide some of the poorest communities in Africa and Asia with a safe drinking water supply, provide better sanitation and promote hygiene. We want to build on these efforts so that Scottish Water can do more and we will, therefore, involve Scottish Water more closely in Scotland’s International Development policy. Scottish Water has the resources that can make a critical difference, including skills, expertise, equipment and funds. We will direct Scottish Water to work with the Scottish Government in partnership to ensure these resources make the most effective contribution to Scotland’s international development objectives, particularly relating to access to clean water and sanitation.

And we will increase our efforts to support developing nations as they respond to the challenges of climate change. We have heard the calls from many for Scotland to create a Climate Adaptation Fund. Given the pressures on the Scottish Government’s budget we will work with partners in business, charitable foundations and non-governmental organisations so we can co-ordinate efforts to build a Scotland-wide climate adaptation fund. And as part of our commitment to climate mitigation we will take forward initiatives to share Scottish knowledge, skills and expertise.

We have recently announced funding for an innovative scheme, in partnership with the University of Strathclyde, to deliver community-owned and maintained solar panels to provide access to renewable energy in rural Malawi. This is delivering skills, revenue and health improvements in the communities involved, and the next stage is looking at further requirements for trials ahead of a potential scaling up of the project. This is exactly the sort of action we believe is needed to deliver local energy solutions as part of our contribution to global action on climate change.

We will support the Maldives to develop renewable marine energy and go carbon neutral by 2020, and we will take forward our recently-signed agreement with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to promote Scottish expertise in the development of clean energy technology and projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. And, we will further develop Scotland-Malawi links, with a particular focus on food production and food science in the face of climate change. The Moredun Institute will work with Malawi to take forward this important work.

With leadership to organise and support a nationwide effort and through the sharing of knowledge and expertise, Scotland will play a full part in global efforts to meet and adapt to the challenges of climate change.

International Engagement

Over these next five years we will work to build relationships with key partners across the world. We will take forward our refreshed engagement plan with the USA and our new Canada plan. We will continue to update and implement our China and South Asia engagement plans with a focus on business, trade, education, culture, science and tourism. We will also seek an enhanced role for Scotland in Europe including through the Scotland Europa Office in Brussels and continue to support the effective network of SDI offices.

We will also work to engage more effectively with Scotland’s diaspora and involve them more closely in our culture and our economic success. We will take forward plans for “Scotland Exchange”, a new social network which will promote engagement with Scotland’s diaspora.

“That is why we have used £40 million seized from organised criminals and invested it in a wide range of sporting activities – from football to basketball to hockey – for children in deprived areas.”



Sport and Commonwealth Games

Scots are passionate about sport and our country has a long and proud sporting tradition. But sports participation and achievement are only part of the picture. Tens of thousands of Scots already realise the benefits to be gained from participating in some form of physical activity. We want more people to get active. We believe that only by looking at physical activity and sport together will we harness that passion and tradition to make them an engine of positive change in our country – improving health, reducing anti-social behaviour and making our society fairer.

Commonwealth Games and its Legacy

Helping Scots become more active is at the heart of our vision for a sporting nation. The 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow provide a fantastic opportunity for Scotland to realise that vision and embed physical activity in our culture. The Scottish Government is committed to funding 80% of the total cost of the Games and a re-elected SNP will ensure the Games continue to be delivered on time and on budget.

The Scottish Government's games legacy for Scotland outlines an ambitious long-term approach that aims to capitalise on this once-in-a-generation opportunity to host a major international sporting event in the heart of Scotland. The SNP's manifesto for sport aims to use the Games in 2014 to put Scotland on the path to a healthier and more successful future.

A re-elected SNP government will continue to demand the return of lottery monies diverted from Scottish good causes to help fund the London Olympics. The UK government has confirmed that a sum of £114 million has been diverted. The return of this funding, and the delivery of specific lottery support for the Commonwealth Games as for the 2012 Olympics, would help turn what we consider to be a good legacy from the 2014 games into a great legacy.

Elite Athletes

Our sportsmen and women can be proud of their achievements on the international stage. For example, we exceeded our expectations when it came to securing medals at the Delhi Games. We want to maintain that success and will provide £8 million in funding for our elite athlete programme up to 2014.

Community Sports Hubs

Community Sports Hubs are a key legacy component of the SNP's ambition for a healthier and more active Scotland. Based in local facilities such as sports centres, community centres and schools, hubs bring local people together and provide a home for local clubs and sports organisations. Hubs also provide information, support and advice on a wide range of sports and physical activities to make it easier for local people to engage in a more active and healthier lifestyle. Only by making participation in physical activity and sports more accessible and attractive will we succeed in our overall ambition to create a more active population.

The SNP in government has thus far delivered 35 community sports hubs in eight local authorities. We will build on this success by committing to deliver at least 100 community sports hubs across all 32 councils by 2014.

Community Ownership

We will also support community ownership of local sports facilities. The SNP government has invested heavily in funding to support the creation of social enterprises and we will encourage local communities to engage with these funding streams to take forward their plans.

Active Schools

If we are to make Scotland an active nation, getting children involved in sport at an early age is vital. Alongside the community sports hubs, the Active Schools programme is designed to increase the number of opportunities for children to get engaged in physical activity and sport. The programme develops links with sports clubs and other community organisations to give pupils a 'pathway' to facilitate their participation in sport beyond school. Active Schools has proved a remarkable success. From the £13 million invested to fund the programme in 2009-10 we saw:

- the deployment of 450 Active Schools staff
- participation by 2,500 schools in all 32 local authority areas
- the delivery of almost 5 million sessions in 69 different sports

The SNP in government will build on this success by continuing to fund the Active Schools programme in line with existing levels.

To this end, we will continue to work with COSLA to open up the school estate over and above regular hours and, in doing so, deliver more sporting opportunities for children as well as the wider community.

Delivery of PE

Under the SNP, huge strides have been made in the delivery of Physical Education in our schools. 55% of school pupils now receive two hours of PE per week, compared to just 5% in 2005. In addition, 60% of secondary schools inspected in 2009-10 were delivering at least two 50 or 55-minute periods.

We will build on this progress and by 2014 our aim is to deliver at least two hours of PE in primary schools and at least two periods of PE in secondary schools for pupils in S1-S4.

Investment in Sport

CashBack for Communities – The lack of sports facilities and sporting opportunities in local neighbourhoods can lead to frustration and disillusionment amongst youngsters. That is why we have used £40 million seized from organised criminals and invested it in a wide range of activities including in sport – from football to basketball to hockey – for children in deprived areas. We will expand the use of this "CashBack" money for community sports.

Football – Football is a force for good in Scotland. Investment from the Scottish Government in the development of football reached a record level of £6.5 million in 2009-10. But we must do more to develop Scotland's national game.

The SNP will continue to work with the SFA to ensure recommendations of the McLeish Review into Scottish Football are delivered. As part of this we will fulfil the Scottish Government's commitment to invest £4 million from sportscotland in the Youth Action Plan over the next four years. We will review the Youth Action Plan to ensure that our continued support for the youth game is developing grassroots football in Scotland. We will also work with Supporters' Trusts to ensure an enhanced role for these important organisations in our national game.

We will use funding from our Young Scots Fund to provide a new National Indoor Football Centre with attached National Football Academy, one of the key recommendations of the McLeish Review. We will invite Local Authorities to bid to have the new centre in their area.

Rugby – Through the cashback programme since May 2007, over £4.5 million has been committed to assist in the development of rugby facilities and implementation of Scottish Rugby's strategic plan.

The SNP will fulfil the commitment of the Scottish Government in 2008 to provide Scottish Rugby with £3.8 million over six years to deliver activities in communities across Scotland. We will also continue to work with Scottish Rugby and other partners to try and secure a leg of the IRB Sevens World Series in Scotland.

Clubgolf – This is Scotland's junior golf initiative and was established as a direct result of Scotland's bid to host the Ryder Cup in 2014. It is delivered in 31 of the 32 local authorities and provides children with an opportunity to experience golf in primary school. Over 180,000 Scottish schoolchildren have progressed through this initiative. Since its inception, the Scottish Government has provided annual investment of £500,000 directly to support this programme. We commit to maintaining this level of funding for the duration of the next parliamentary term.

Swimming – Over and above the £1.4m provided to Scottish Swimming, the Scottish Government has announced an additional £0.8 million to be used as part of a top-up programme which helps Local Authorities work towards an aspiration of helping Primary 7 aged school children learn to swim.

The range of sports which receive government funding through sportscotland is considerable. Over 40 sports, from Angling through to Wrestling, receive direct support. These reflect the rich diversity of activity which thousands of Scots enjoy. We will continue to ensure that this diversity is maintained and promoted.

Facilities

In government the SNP reversed decades of under investment in Scotland's sporting facilities. Since May 2007, the Scottish Government in partnership with sportscotland, has invested almost £35 million in sporting facilities. This has helped to deliver or is delivering:

- Four new multi-sports world-class facilities in Aberdeen, Ravenscraig, Stirling and Scotstoun in Glasgow.
- Four large-scale Commonwealth Games projects currently underway – National Indoor Sports Arena, Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome and Tollcross pool in Glasgow along with the improvements to the Commonwealth pool in Edinburgh.
- 22 football projects valued at over £4 million which has seen new and improved pitches in 13 sites, including eight 3G synthetic pitches and also improvements to changing facilities at 10 locations across Scotland.
- 11 swimming pools with £15.2 million investment including the Olympia pool in Dundee.
- A further 31 projects offering new and improved facilities including support for Pickaquoy on Orkney, Dumfries Ice Bowl and a new Fife Institute in Glenrothes.

The SNP will also ensure that a further £5 million of CashBack monies announced by the Scottish Government in March of this year delivers 21 new multi-sport 3G pitches allowing communities across Scotland to benefit.

A Scottish Government Working to Foster Creativity

INTERVIEW BETWEEN JOAN MCALPINE AND FIONA HYSLOP

JM: I know you are ambitious for Scotland's cultural community, what do you see as the most important next steps to support creativity here in Scotland?

FH: There are three big initiatives I want to take over the next five years. These will create new opportunities for culture and artists here in Scotland. First, I want to bring new sources of funding and support. We will take forward a new initiative to engage with Scotland's diaspora with the aim of involving them directly with Scotland's creative sector. We'll give them various ways of showing support including through contributions to a new Cultural Fund. This will support specific projects with a focus on innovation and the wider dissemination of Scottish culture. We will also facilitate specific sponsorship of individual artists or equity investment in new productions or pieces of work. We want to give the wider community of international Scots a way of engaging with and showing their commitment to Scotland's culture. I also want to see international Cultural Champions who can play a lead role in the promotion of Scottish culture and help us build a network of Scots who are successful and influential in the arts worldwide.

And second, I want to find new ways of encouraging new audiences. We are committed to keeping our national galleries and museums free. And there is more we can do. We are looking at ways of developing a national discounted tickets scheme, and not just for our National Companies. This should cover a wide range of productions including, I hope, performances at the Edinburgh Festivals. I want to work with the theatres and venues, our broadcasters and newspapers and the wider business community to pull together a suitable package, which, given the budgetary position, would have to be supported by external sponsors and partners.

And third, I think it is crucial that we move forward on the Scottish Digital Network. We will be working flat out to generate momentum behind this initiative. Having our own Scottish-based network will help us build a critical mass of work for those involved in all aspects of the creative process, from the writing and performing to the production and support side. It is an important first step as well if we want to develop and support film-making here in Scotland and has wider benefits including in the delivery of better public services. I'd also like to see greater autonomy for BBC Scotland with more of the licence payers' money invested in Scotland and more decisions on programming made here.

JM: The film industry is of course a major international business and looking at nations like New Zealand, they have managed successfully in recent years to build their presence. What ideas do you have to develop film making here in Scotland?

FH: As part of our Young Scots Fund from the savings from the Forth Replacement Crossing, we propose creating a Scottish version of the Australian tropfest. I think this can provide a new outlet for Scottish talent and offer a way of engaging this talent with potential investors. We'll be offering a £20,000 prize as part of this initiative. The prize money and the exposure can give Scottish talent an important first step on the production ladder. The technology now exists for great films to be produced for relatively low cost and for a more 'open source' distribution direct to cinemas. This presents real opportunities for Scotland.

Mark Millar is a great example of what is possible. His first two movies made almost half a billion dollars, but before his next two get released he wants to make a low-budget film in Scotland to show young film-makers that you don't need to live in Hollywood or have big studio backing to do what he's doing. The idea is to prove that Scottish cinema can be mainstream and compete on the world stage, and he is working with the government to create a scheme that brings together talent and potential producers from Scottish business. This scheme would take the shape of an Investors' Night at the Glasgow and Edinburgh Film Festivals where the most commercial and impressive movies previewed would receive a combination of private and government funding, to get made with a view to a substantial return. Our plan is to create new, powerful networks and contacts for the great well of talent in this country - extending into music, theatre and literature as well as Scottish cinema.

JM: You mentioned other talent, in music for example. What more can the government do to support our musicians and music industry?

FH: There's another Australian example I'd like to replicate here in Scotland. In our second term, we will explore with the commercial sector the creation of a New Music Scotland initiative to support existing and emerging commercial musicians. I want to see a big commercial sponsor for an initiative that will encourage a new wave of world-class groups and musicians here in Scotland.

Creative Scotland has just recently announced details of Creative Futures and that is also an exciting initiative, with "musicians in residence" in colleges across the country. This is a scheme I'll be watching closely and if it is as successful as I believe it can be I'd want to see it developed further to support more artists. And again, part of our job is to ensure we have a new generation of musicians emerging onto the Scottish, and indeed world, music scene. As a sign of our commitment, we are supporting the Youth Music Initiative in the year ahead.

JM: Speaking to artists I know they recognise the value of the Expo Fund and the Made in Scotland programme. What are your plans for these initiatives?

FH: Yes, I've been to see many of the performances in recent years and they showcase some of Scotland's best talent. And just as important they allow us to showcase that talent to a wider international audience. We are going to keep both the Expo Fund and Made in Scotland and will look at ways to improve and expand what is already a good package as part of our Young Scots Fund.

Scotland is blessed with a fantastic variety of festivals and we will continue to encourage and support them. Creative Scotland, for example, has undertaken some excellent work identifying and promoting the many festivals across Scotland. We will be working to expand Scotland's Winter Festivals and indeed I want some of our discounted tickets to be for performances specifically during the period from St Andrew's Day to Burns Night. And I also want to see an expansion of existing plans to have live showings of Festival and National Company performances in cinemas around the country - and indeed internationally - bringing the power of the stage to cinema audiences.

JM: The international side of things is important. I've heard you talking before about Scotland's cultural ambassadors. What role do you see for Scotland's cultural community in the wider promotion of Scotland globally?

I've just spoken about our National Companies. They are great ambassadors for Scottish culture. I am looking at ways of giving the companies greater financial security. I'm also looking to see whether there are disincentives in place at the moment which hinder a more commercial focus for the National Companies and National Collections. And internationally, we are keeping the International Touring Fund, and I want to see the increasing co-ordination of National Company tours overseas, alongside other companies, museum and gallery loans and even trade missions for an 'all Scotland' approach to cultural and economic promotion.

JM: I've noticed that Scotland is increasingly using technology to promote our culture and heritage internationally.

FH: Yes, you will have seen our new Burns App. The complete works of Robert Burns is now available on iTunes. This is just the start. Over the next five years we will be using the platform offered by smartphones and tablets to reach new audiences for Scottish works - not just internationally but also to make the wealth of Scottish literature and culture more accessible here at home.

And we have a truly world-leading piece of digital technology already in place here in Scotland. The Scottish Ten allows us to take 3D imaging of some of our great heritage sites to create virtual environments for people to explore. This technology will be used in the Bannockburn Battlefield and Visitor Centre Project. You will be able to walk through the battlefield and see the battle as it happened as if it was taking place around you. This will be a must-visit attraction and I am proud that the SNP government is so heavily involved.

There is a huge opportunity for Scotland to promote our heritage and culture online. The National Library and the National Archives, for example, are working to increase the online availability of family history records as part of a major effort to boost ancestral tourism.

JM: Of course, the traditional arts are a major part of our heritage and one of the most vibrant parts of our modern cultural expression. What plans do you have here?

Yes, they are, in many respects, what makes so much of Scottish culture distinctive. That's why we will develop apprenticeship schemes to preserve traditional arts such as instrument making, music and dance. We've had a series of recommendations from the Traditional Arts Working Group and over the next five years we will work with the sector to take forward as many of these as possible. I also want to work to develop a specific visitor programme in Scotland for the 2012 Olympic Games so we can attract some of the visitors to London here to Scotland. I am keen to see the traditional arts featuring prominently in the programme.

JM: That sounds like a great initiative. There are clearly exciting times ahead for culture and creativity here in Scotland. Thank you, Fiona Hyslop.



 Fiona Hyslop
twitter.com/FionaHyslop

Through creative expression we see and understand ourselves as a society and as nation.

Scotland has a wealth of creativity and through our culture – in its many forms – we enrich our lives and our learning, our economy and our society. Over these next five years the SNP is determined to build a more vibrant nation with creativity recognised and promoted and our artists and performers given new support and encouragement to excel in what they do.

With our undoubted talent, world-renowned festivals, rich heritage and linguistic diversity we have strong foundations. And, through the effective use of new technology and with the creation of new ways of supporting culture and artists, I have no doubt that the next five years are years of great potential. Scotland can and will flourish and, as we work to build a better nation, our artistic communities have a central role to play as the cultural champions of our nation, at home and in the world.

Fiona Hyslop

Culture

We will support Creative Scotland as it takes forward its business plan and strategic vision, in turn, empowering our artists to be powerful advocates for Scotland at home and abroad.

Literature

We will establish a National Book Week from 2012 and further develop and enhance the artists' residency programme through the "Creative Futures" programme. This significant residency programme will support an initial 200 residencies across all artistic practices and genres, including writers.

Libraries

We want to support Scotland's network of libraries and see a future role for many local libraries as 'cultural hubs' building on the valuable role played by libraries in communities across Scotland.

Education and Culture

We will take forward the proposals in the Education and Culture Action Plan and continue our support for the Creativity Portal to give teachers access to projects and opportunities offered by cultural organisations across Scotland. We will provide training and professional support to teachers and creative practitioners and take forward a National Arts Education Network.

Outreach

We will continue to support and encourage outreach and education programmes of the National Collections, National Companies and Creative Scotland and in particular will support the Let's Get Scotland Dancing initiative as part of the Commonwealth Games 2014 legacy work. We recognise the benefits of this work in terms of health and well-being as well as cultural experience, and the confidence and skills generated and developed by being involved in experiences such as music, dance, art and theatre.

Museums and Galleries

We will implement a new national strategy for Scotland's museum and gallery sector, including the establishment of a National Development Body. The Scottish Government will directly fund the Scottish Mining Museum, Scottish Maritime Museum, and Scottish Fisheries Museum.

Scotland's languages

We support the introduction of a Scottish Studies element within the curriculum and see this as an important vehicle for protecting and promoting Scotland's languages and also their literature. We will develop a national Scots language policy, with increased support for Scots in education, encouragement of a greater profile for Scots in the media, and the establishment of a network of Scots co-ordinators. We will promote the acquisition, use and status of Gaelic through the implementation of the Gaelic Action Plan with the aim of ensuring that by 2021 the proportion of Gaelic speakers is back up to 2001 levels. We will continue to raise the profile of the Gaelic language across Scotland, and, crucially, ensure that in Scotland's most strongly

Gaelic-speaking communities, Gaelic continues to be in use as a community language.

Heritage and Built Environment

We have introduced new legislation to protect and promote our unique heritage and built environment, providing new safeguards that prevent inappropriate development and allow us to pass on a legacy of which future generations of Scots can be proud. The historic environment directly supports around 41,000 jobs and is estimated to contribute more than £2.3 billion to Scotland, making it a significant contributor to sustainable economic growth. We will continue to support Historic Scotland as they take forward their strategy for sustaining and developing traditional building skills including their plans for a National Conservation Centre in Stirling.

Across Scotland we have invested substantially in our nation's heritage including the Stirling Palace Project, the Royal Museum, National Portrait Gallery and the new Burns Museum in Alloway and this will remain a focus for the next five years.

St Andrew's Day

The SNP believes that St Andrew's Day should be marked more widely across Scotland. To take this forward we will ensure that for 2014 – our next year of Homecoming – St Andrew's Day is celebrated as a full national holiday. We will assess the success of this initiative before setting out our proposals for future celebration of St Andrew's Day as a national holiday.

“Through our culture – in its many forms – we enrich our lives and our learning.”

Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture

Low Carbon Ambition and Opportunity

Making the Most of Scotland's Low Carbon Opportunity

We are committed to ensuring there are 130,000 jobs in the low carbon economy by 2020.

We have established the £70 million National Renewables Infrastructure Fund, with the first funding now allocated and more to come in the years ahead. This will strengthen port and manufacturing facilities and supply chain provision across the country and make sure Scotland is well placed to secure investment in the manufacture of offshore wind turbines and related components. This too will leverage significant private sector investment in the next five years and, on its own, help deliver 28,000 jobs and £7.1 billion in value to Scotland's economy over the next ten years. To date, projects have been approved with an estimated spend of £378 million.

We are working hard to ensure that Scottish business is well placed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the low-carbon economy. That includes reprioritising the £15 million of innovation funding in the Lowlands European Structural Funds Programme towards the Low Carbon Economy, to support the development of those innovative low-carbon technologies where Scotland has the greatest competitive advantage. This match funding can create £60 million of support in the years ahead to help create jobs in new and innovative projects.

We are providing updated online planning advice for renewable energy technologies. This will set out the way SEPA and SNH will interact more proportionately as consultees in development planning and management. We will continue to work over the next five years to ensure Scotland's planning system encourages sustainable development.

We will work with communities and developers to agree ways of ensuring an enhanced role for local people in agreeing sites for wind turbines when these are to be located within close proximity of the communities themselves. We are keen to expand public and community ownership of renewables projects and will work with investors to establish a new Scottish Green Equity Fund to support the development of community projects.

Renewables Targets

When we took office we raised the renewable electricity target for 2020 from 40% to 50%, and have recently raised it further to 80%. However, given the scale of Scotland's offshore renewable potential we believe our nation can achieve even more and so we propose increasing our 2020 target to 100%. Scotland will remain a big exporter of electricity and we will also generate 100% of our electricity needs from renewable power. There is, of course, no upper limit to our ambition. We will also work with industry to explore whether we should also extend our renewable heat target.

We have also set a target of 2 GW renewable energy production by 2020 from the land managed on behalf of Ministers by Forestry Commission Scotland, including delivery of market-leading community benefits. We also wish to see a rapid expansion of renewable energy production by Scottish Water.

Equipping Scots with Green Skills

Given the scale of the opportunity presented to Scotland as a result of our low-carbon ambition, our technological and scientific expertise and the vast renewable energy potential around our shores, we are determined to ensure that Scotland's people have the skills they need to prosper as a result of our

nation's green energy revolution. That's why, as part of our announcement of a record number of modern apprenticeships each year for the next five years, we have confirmed 500 dedicated apprenticeships for the energy and low-carbon industry.

We have already supported business in the development of green skills hubs in Scotland to ensure we have the capacity to deliver energy efficiency and renewable generation measures in our communities and our homes and we will work to expand these sorts of initiatives. We also will work with our colleges and other training providers to establish improved connections and build capacity with networks of providers through regional Green Skills Academies. These will not be new bricks and mortar buildings but will instead make full use of existing resources and facilities as a starting point for increased provision.

Supporting Businesses

We have just recently made it easier for owners of public buildings and businesses to generate energy using technologies such as solar panels without requiring planning permission. The initiative will apply for solar thermal panels, solar photo voltaic panels, pipework for ground source heat pumps and water source heat pumps and biomass boilers.

We are also developing a single energy and resource efficiency service to business, enabling all companies to gain access to streamlined support.

Research

We've recently supported the new Scottish Energy Laboratory (SEL) to strengthen collaboration across 50 energy research, test and demonstration facilities and underpin Scotland's leading position in low-carbon energy development. We will continue to support this initiative and look for ways of further enhancing Scotland's energy research base. We will also work to attract new international R&D investment to Scotland. Already, three of the six largest turbine manufacturers in the world, Gamesa, Mitsubishi and Doosan, are committed to research and development for their offshore wind technology here in Scotland. And substantial work is also being undertaken by indigenous Scottish companies including Scottish and Southern Energy, Scottish Power and BiFab. We will work to build on this growing research activity to cement Scotland's place at the forefront of offshore renewable technology.

Saltire Prize

The Saltire Prize, has attracted more than 150 registrations of interest from 31 countries. It will remain a central part of the SNP's offshore energy strategy.

Marine Renewables

Scotland has a particular wealth of opportunity and resource for marine renewables, and some of the leading companies in wave technology including Aquamarine and Pelamis. This is seen by the world-leading developments around our shores, including the recent confirmation by Scottish Power Renewables of the world's largest tidal flow scheme off Islay. This is the first of many major initiatives, as Scotland moves into a lead position in technology and deployment of marine renewables. Scotland has been described as the "Saudi Arabia of tidal power", and the potential offered by our marine renewables is of a scale that can match the wealth and opportunity created by oil and gas in the North Sea.

We are acting to support the development of this sector with the publication of Regional Locational Guidance on the areas of Scotland's seas most suited to marine energy development.



This year we will also complete the Strategic Environmental Assessment process for offshore wind energy in Scottish territorial waters. Together these will provide developers with greater confidence to invest and ensure that development is sustainable and takes account of impact on other marine users.

We are developing statutory, integrated marine plans for all Scottish waters out to 200 nautical miles to provide the framework for sustainable economic growth and sound management. We will consult on our proposals later this year.

Our Strategic Vision

When the SNP entered government we said we would make the creation of a North Sea Supergrid a central focus of our international efforts. With the backing of the European Union and nations across the North Sea now signed up, the supergrid is on its way: and that will allow us to get the vast energy from offshore Scotland to markets across Europe. An SNP government will also prioritise North Sea Carbon Capture with Scotland becoming a hub for technology, transportation and storage. We want Scotland not only to rule the waves with marine renewables, but to lead Europe in Carbon Capture.

We are also determined to provide strategic support for the offshore renewables sector and will continue to work with the industry as we press for reform of the transmission charging regime as part of wider electricity market reform.

In government we will also look at ways of driving down costs for the renewables sector, and will work with the industry to explore new initiatives such as joint procurement arrangements for insurance and vessels.

Hydro Power

We have published two hydropower studies which suggest that up to a further 1200 MW of economically-viable, small-scale hydro could be exploited in Scotland. We are streamlining the hydro consent process by recently consulting on raising the threshold for consent, which would release further renewable energy capacity by encouraging schemes of over 1 MW.

Carbon Generation

We have published the Electricity Generation Policy statement for Scotland setting out the Scottish Government's position on the role for renewable electricity and fossil fuel thermal generation in Scotland's future energy mix. It sets out new developments and implications in the following areas. Any new coal-fired station would need to demonstrate Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) on at least 300 MW of its capacity from day one and retro-fitting for those stations by no later than 2025, with 100% CCS expected on new builds from 2020. The policy statement also makes clear that increased renewable generation means we now see no energy need for additional thermal generation plants.

Biomass

We support the expansion of local, small-scale biomass and share public concerns over the large-scale schemes now being proposed in some parts of Scotland.

Climate Change and Environment

Over these past four years we have made sure Climate Change is at the heart of our actions in government. Parliament united to pass important Climate Change legislation and we have also set out in our Adaptation Framework the options facing our nation if we are to meet our targets. Scotland is already more than halfway to meeting our 2020 target of a 42% reduction in emissions and it is clear that more work is needed in the years ahead.

We have introduced carbon budgeting in Scotland and put Climate Change considerations at the very heart of decision making in government. We will continue to press the EU to move to increase its reduction target from 20% to 30% and work with the UK government to remove barriers in areas such as transmission charges to enable Scotland to make the greatest possible carbon reduction contribution. Our approach is not one that will see us moving straight to regulation. We will look first to encouragement and voluntary action and will support individuals and communities across Scotland as they make their own contribution to reducing output of CO₂. This approach is illustrated in our Future Transport Fund and Warm Homes Fund set out earlier in this manifesto. These will enable us to take important action within communities to reduce carbon emissions.

Transport

We will begin to develop the infrastructure to support electric cars, beginning in our urban areas and in the central belt, and will continue to increase the proportion of transport spending that goes on low-carbon, active and sustainable travel. We can make big carbon savings from transport. That is why we will also take forward our proposals for the electrification of the central Scotland rail network and continue to support the expansion of Park and Ride facilities across Scotland.

Carbon Sinks

We will make use of our natural carbon sinks, including the development of those in the marine environment. We will take action to protect and restore peatlands and will significantly expand our forest estate with the planting of 100 million trees by 2015.

Renewable Heat

We will establish an Expert Commission on the Delivery of District Heating to advise on the steps we need to take to ensure a major move to district heating in Scotland. We will ask the Scottish Futures Trust to provide advice on the most appropriate financial mechanisms to support the up front cost, paid back from the future savings from such schemes. In the meantime, we will take forward our proposals for a District Heating Loan Fund.

Energy Efficiency

We will take forward plans for 'Pay as you Save' energy efficiency schemes for households and businesses and bring together investment from our two existing funds into a single national Universal Home Insulation Scheme. Our target, by introducing new, self-financing funding models would be to increase annual spending on energy efficiency in Scotland, including by the Scottish Government and through the current Carbon Emissions Reduction Target and future Energy Company Obligation. We will work with the UK government and energy companies to ensure Scotland is well placed to maximise funding.

Climate Challenge Fund

We are increasing funding for the community-focused Climate Challenge Fund in the year ahead and will maintain its funding over the next five years. And, on a trial basis, we will allow some schemes to generate an income, potentially helping projects move to a stronger financial footing and allowing funds to be used to support new projects. We will also establish as part of the fund a new Junior Climate Challenge Fund to encourage projects involving young Scots in their communities.

Research

We will continue to support the Centre for Climate Change Research in Scotland and encourage closer collaboration within Scotland's academic community on climate change adaptation and mitigation projects. Scotland is, for example, at the forefront of research into smart grids and we will continue to support and encourage the development and use of this technology.

Our Marine Environment

We want to develop our National Marine Plan for Scotland and regional marine plans to ensure a balanced use of our seas within a wider ecosystem approach. We will work with partners to explore how we can regenerate Scotland's marine environment. This will include efforts to reduce marine litter.

Biodiversity

We will continue efforts to protect Scotland's natural habitats and native species. And, we will work with communities to explore the creation of new National Parks, and seek views on Scottish participation in the UNESCO Biosphere initiative.

Moving to a Zero Waste Scotland

Last year we published Scotland's first ever Zero Waste strategy and we are now measuring recycling on the basis of carbon contribution. We are determined to build on a record which has seen big improvements in recycling rates and reductions in waste going to landfill.

We have set two new targets that will apply to all waste: a 70% target for recycled waste and maximum 5% to be sent to landfill, both by 2025. We also want to see a total ban on organic waste being sent to landfill by 2017. We will monitor these targets and look to increase them where appropriate. We will introduce Zero Waste legislation during 2011, with the intention that new measures will come into force in 2013, subject to the consultation process.

Viewing waste as a resource opens many doors. Instead of carelessly discarding materials to landfill, we can create new products and generate renewable energy, heat and fertiliser while creating over 2,000 jobs. Our Zero Waste Plan will help deliver progressive landfill bans, with the end goal of there being no waste with reuse or recycling potential being sent to landfill by 2020.

We will also look to pilot a deposit return/reverse vending systems for single use plastic, glass and aluminium containers and will work with partners in the retail sector to explore options. We will also seek to phase out free plastic bags in supermarkets and, if needs be, will consider legislation. We will encourage Scottish companies to sign up to a Zero Waste Pledge and will work to attract a plastics reprocessing plant to Scotland.

“We will build on Scotland Performs to ensure a broader assessment of national wellbeing and success.”

Energy from Waste

The 25% cap on municipal waste that can be used for Energy from Waste schemes will be replaced with a package of measures, including landfill bans, mandatory segregation of certain waste types, a limit on the biodegradable content of waste that can be landfilled, and restrictions on the materials that may be input to incinerators. This will form part of our Zero Waste Bill. We will seek, in particular, to expand small-scale biomass from food and farm waste.

The Contribution of the Public Sector

We will continue to take steps to reduce the carbon footprint of the Scottish Government and its agencies and will encourage all parts of the public sector to play their part in meeting our emissions targets. We will look to integrate climate change more closely into policy work across government, for example through public health policy and in our schools.

A Wider Assessment of National Success

We will build on Scotland Performs to ensure a broader assessment of national wellbeing and success.

Green Investment Bank

We will continue to press for the proposed Green Investment Bank to be located in Scotland. We will work to secure maximum investment for Scotland through the Green Investment Bank. Given Scotland's massive renewable energy resource we believe that Scottish projects should attract investment of at least £1 billion.

The Fossil Fuel Levy

Any investment in the Green Investment Bank should not be at the expense of Scotland's £200 million Fossil Fuel Levy. We will demand the release of the Fossil Fuel Levy. The resources currently locked up as a result of UK Treasury rules could provide an additional boost to Scotland's renewables sector. The release of this money would allow for important investment in building our renewables infrastructure across Scotland, such as capacity in Nigg and other Highland ports. This will allow us to do even more to release our offshore renewable potential and make Scotland Europe's clean, green energy powerhouse. There is an opportunity for 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in offshore wind and 10,000 in other offshore marine technologies, and the UK government must no longer stand in the way.

Engines of Growth

Urban Scotland

Scotland is a highly urbanised nation. Over 80% of our population lives in settlements of over 3,000 people. And so, over the next five years we are determined to deliver a new focus on urban and city growth, including a new and refreshed Scottish Cities Review.

Our Cities Agenda

Given the importance of our cities as economic, research and cultural centres, we will introduce a new Cities Agenda, overseen in government by the Deputy First Minister who will also become Scotland's Cities Minister. We want Scotland's cities to flourish and our plan will bring together investment in the economy, culture, transport and infrastructure to support these engines of growth in the Scottish economy.

Empowered Cities

Our plans include taking forward Tax Increment Finance (TIF). The go-ahead has already been given for the use of this innovative financing mechanism, and it is now successfully leveraging new private sector investment to support the regeneration of Leith Waterfront and new economic activity in that area. We are working with other cities and other parts of urban Scotland to identify projects suitable for TIF, for example the Buchanan Galleries in Glasgow, which will deliver tangible improvements to community renewal across the country.

We will work with the cities to develop a more flexible regulatory framework which empowers them to develop alternative financing models and will also enter discussion with our city councils and others on the granting of a general power of competence to enable our cities to do more to deliver higher levels of sustainable economic growth. And, a part of this we are sympathetic to calls for a move away from short-term funding streams to enable more effective long term planning and support infrastructure investment in particular.

We will introduce a new Funding Floor to ensure that no Local Authority receives less than 85% of the Scottish average in terms of Revenue Support. This will be funded by additional money from central government.

Connected Cities

We will continue to improve commuter rail connections into Glasgow and Edinburgh, following the deployment of a new fleet of longer electric trains. Our rail investment is also delivering more-frequent and faster services on the key commuter routes from Ayrshire and Inverclyde among others.

We will take forward the planned electrification of the central Scotland rail network which will deliver journey times of just over half an hour between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Our plans also include faster and more frequent rail connections between Inverness and Aberdeen. They will also see faster journey times between these two cities, Dundee, Stirling, Perth and the central belt. And, to support Glasgow 2014, we will provide investment for the proposed Clyde Fastlink, and we will also support the modernisation of the Glasgow Subway.

We will ensure ongoing improvements to dual the A9 from Perth to Inverness and the upgrade of the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness, as well as completing our national motorway network including the M8 and M74.

We demand that Scotland is included in the first phase of the High Speed Rail network and will work with our two major cities to establish a technical group including Transport Scotland, the Scottish Futures Trust and other partners to take forward proposals and build Scotland's case.

We recognise that our cities' infrastructure needs extend beyond transport, and so will provide investment to improve Glasgow's drainage and wastewater treatment and to deliver a new water treatment works for Edinburgh.

Active, Creative Cities

Scotland's cities are important hubs for so much of our leisure activity, including sport and culture. They are home to many of our most important cultural institutions and hosts to major national and international events. Events Scotland will continue to work to draw world-class sporting and other events to Scotland. The 2014 Commonwealth Games is a great example, with the city council and Scottish Government working together and with other partners to ensure the games' success. As part of our commitment to a wider legacy from the Commonwealth Games, we will continue our investment in the urban regeneration companies.

We are proud to have supported the Stirling Palace Project and remain committed to investment in our heritage and cultural infrastructure including the Bannockburn Visitors' Centre. These two projects will play a major part in the growing tourism potential of the Stirling area. Our approach includes new support for the redevelopment of the Theatre Royal and Concert Hall in Glasgow and ongoing support for the new Victoria & Albert Museum in Dundee. The V&A is one of the most exciting projects in Scotland and will be at the centre of a major regeneration of that city.

We also recognise the huge contribution Scotland's festivals make to our economy and our society and so remain committed to the highly successful Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund.

World-leading Centres for Research and Learning

Our cities are already the home to some of the most successful universities in the world – universities with a world-leading record in research. We are determined to build on this success. We have already supported the amalgamation of the University of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh College of Art and will provide funding for the Glasgow Colleges project, based on the completion of a workable business plan.

We were also providing funding for Strathclyde University's new Technology and Innovation Centre and the ITREZ project, which will create 700 new research jobs in Glasgow. We will continue to support this important project.

Town Centre Regeneration

As part of our wider commitment to growth across urban Scotland we will continue to invest in Scotland's town centres. This will include new urban business centres and wireless technology zones and the creation of town centre business hubs, funded through our £50 million Scottish JESSICA fund. This fund will also support a range of urban regeneration projects including renewal of derelict sites and more efficient transport schemes.

We will also look to bring together the various existing funding streams to create a simpler, more easily accessible Town Centre Regeneration Fund, which will focus on important improvements to the built environment and heritage of our town centres, contributing in this way to making our town centres more attractive places to do business. We will also continue to support the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative.

“We want Scotland's cities to flourish and our plan will bring together investment in the economy, culture, transport and infrastructure to support these engines of growth in the Scottish economy.”



Key Sectors

As Scotland's government we have been working to support key sectors in the Scottish economy. The updated Economic Recovery Plan published by John Swinney in February 2011 sets out in more detail some of our recent actions and future plans. After May we will look to continue these efforts and take forward the proposals set out in the Economic Recovery Plan.

Manufacturing

We will work over these next five years, with the sector, to open markets, help companies to innovate, make production efficiency savings and safeguard jobs in order to boost Scotland's share of global markets. And we will take forward the framework for future work to support the manufacturing sector in Scotland agreed with the Scottish Trades Union Congress. Expanding manufacturing in Scotland will be a key priority, with renewable energy investment in particular providing the opportunity to re-industrialise Scotland.

Creative Industries

We will continue to support some important initiatives for Scotland's creative sector, including Interactive Scotland. We will also continue to work with NESTA to deliver support for creative businesses through the Starter for 6 programme and with Creative Scotland through their Innovation Fund for creative entrepreneurs. Creative Scotland has recently published its Creative Industries Strategy emphasising the importance of ensuring that the creative industries are equipped to prosper in a period of rapid technological change. We will support Creative Scotland as they take forward this work.

We will give priority to supporting the digital gaming industry and to securing the necessary tax breaks that would encourage further success. We will seek to strengthen links between developers and investors to improve access to finance for development companies. We will also continue to strengthen co-operation between Higher Education and games developers to ensure graduates have the relevant skills. And digital gaming will be at the heart of our efforts to increase exports by 50% over the next six years – we will support export-oriented game developers to win business in global markets.

Science and Engineering

Science and engineering have an important part to play in Scotland's future economic success. We will continue to support innovation and excellence in research and work with our universities and Scottish Enterprise to further develop opportunities for the effective commercialisation and development of Scottish research. We will develop a long-term strategy for science and engineering in Scotland, led by the Chief Scientific Adviser. The SNP will continue to support efforts to develop the Space industry in Scotland. We back the introduction of legal status for commercial space flight and permission for the use of RAF Lossiemouth for these flights.

Tourism

We are determined to maximise tourist growth and draw new visitors to Scotland. Tourism promotion will feature heavily in our 'All Scotland' approach to overseas engagement, bringing together important strands including culture, outdoor activities and food and drink. We want to build on the success of Homecoming 2009 and as we approach the second year of Homecoming in 2014 we will deliver a series of themed years specifically drawing visitors to Scotland to participate in our culture, experience our outdoors and enjoy the celebrations in 2014, the year in which the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup will put Scotland centre stage in world sporting terms.

We will further develop ancestral tourism, with a particular focus on family history. Scotland already leads the world in the services we offer to family historians and we will look to build on these foundations to draw even more ancestral Scots to our shores. And we will also put renewed effort into promoting cultural tourism. We will work with some of Scotland's leading artists as part of a wider initiative to promote Scottish culture abroad; we want these cultural ambassadors to be part of our Big Invitation to the world to visit Scotland. And when tourists come, we will make sure they are aware of the wealth of cultural activity at both a national and local level. Scotland also has huge potential in the growing eco and activity tourism markets and we will continue our support for the expansion of these important sectors.

Construction

The SNP in government is working with the construction sector to encourage best practice, improve research and innovation, and to improve performance. We will support the sector with a new pipeline of investment which will deliver major projects in transport, health and education.

In addition, our £250 million Scottish Futures Fund will provide new opportunities for small and medium-sized Scottish construction companies.

We believe the UK government should introduce a targeted VAT reduction on building maintenance and repair. This would have the twin benefits of supporting the construction industry and also making it easier for people and businesses to improve the energy efficiency of their properties. The SNP has pushed this issue at Westminster, and will continue to make the case to the UK government.

Life Sciences

The Life Sciences Advisory Board (LiSAB) is taking forward Scotland's life sciences strategy and over the next five years, the SNP in government will continue to work with LiSAB to deliver the right support for the sector. With a new strategy we will be able to optimise the impact of the sector generating new opportunities and more jobs and identify where existing academic and commercial Scottish strengths are aligned with near-term, global market opportunities to deliver greater benefits for the Scottish economy, including attracting more Venture Capital investment.

We will deliver greater alignment between life sciences R&D support from Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Government and NHS procurement, working through the Medtech road map to help medical technology companies obtain advice on product development and procurement from NHS Scotland. We will continue to support the sector through Regional Selective Assistance awards and work to maximise the benefit from their intellectual property for our universities and research institutes, and therefore the Scottish economy.

Financial Services

We will continue to work closely with the Financial Services Advisory Board to ensure Scotland is well placed to grow financial services business and employment and attract further global investment. We will also take forward our Scottish Banking Strategy, set out earlier in this manifesto.



“We will continue to support innovation and excellence in research and work with our universities and Scottish Enterprise.”



Scotland's Food and Drink

“In terms of Scottish Government achievements, the overriding thing for me is Scotland's national food and drink policy. It is refreshing to see government taking an active interest in the food industry and actually doing something about it.”

Andrew Fairlie, Two Star Michelin Chef

Growing Scotland's Food and Drink Sector

Food and drink has been one of the big success stories of Scotland's economy in recent years, with industry turnover increasing from £10 billion to £11 billion between 2007 and 2008 and food and drink exports reaching record levels in 2010. We are determined to grow Scotland's food and drink sector to £12.5 billion by 2017. And we will put the full weight of government support behind this target, with extensive efforts to promote Scottish exports and in particular Scottish food exports internationally. A big focus of our efforts will be on job creation – we will work to develop a growing local food market and to ensure ongoing food security for our nation.

We will continue to work with our supermarkets who have an important role to play in the success of Scotland's food and drink sector. We will publicise information on Scottish produce sold by supermarkets with an annual report on their performance to enable consumers to recognise and reward those supermarket chains making the greatest effort to support Scottish producers. As part of this, we will work on the 'fair shares' principle and give particular recognition to those firms that properly reward primary producers. This will include the development of a 'fair shares' standard.

And at home we will encourage all Scottish outlets to sell local food and drink to visitors, and will work with the industry to develop a new 'Scottish Food Fans' grading system for establishments that stock local and seasonal produce. We will also support efforts to establish a national chain of community-based food networks that link up local suppliers with catering outlets, cafes, hotels and retailers.

Our plans for the future include a £1 million Great Scottish Food Challenge to support the development of new products for market. The aim is to maximise the value for rural businesses and communities by delivering value-added products, processed and developed here in Scotland. We will continue to invest in food technology and processing and propose the creation of new links between our creative and food sectors to improve packaging and labelling and therefore the marketability of new Scottish products.

The recently-refreshed food and drink industry strategy provides strong direction for longer-term expansion of the sector. We propose a new 'Added Value' campaign – a farm to fork, net to plate initiative – to maximise the economic return from food production and enable the creation of new jobs. And we will make use of existing global networks to create a series of Scottish Food and Drink Ambassadors to promote our nation's produce across the globe.

We will also continue with our efforts to improve food education in Scotland's schools so that young Scots are empowered to choose fresh, healthy, local and seasonal food.

We will work to ensure Scotland has more allotments. We will bring the legislation up to date to allow for the sale of surplus produce, and look at ways of extending the land available for allotments using unused or underused publicly-owned land.

Some actions to support jobs in the food and drink sector

- Over 7,000 jobs have been safeguarded or created through £34 million of awards of Scottish Government support made since 2007 to 174 businesses for food processing and marketing.
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise has invested £2.2 million with 67 companies who are expected to generate £45 million gross value added over the next four years.
- Scottish Enterprise has account-managed over 200 food and drink companies a year, helping them to break into new markets, develop new products, build premium brands, find investment funding and improve the skills of their people.
- Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service has supported 74 food and drink business improvement projects, generating £12.8 million in added value.
- There has been a 30% increase in the sale of Scottish food and drink brands across Scotland, England and Wales.



Rural Agenda

I want to see more and better jobs in flourishing rural communities.

My vision is for a rural Scotland that is growing in prosperity and in population. Rural communities that are well served, with a vibrant local school, a busy community owned village hall, and which have new and growing businesses.

Over this next decade I want to see more people living and working in rural Scotland, whether in traditional industries like farming, crofting, tourism or forestry or in new industries like renewables or data storage. It should be more difficult to close rural schools and much easier for rural communities to kick-start their own initiatives. I want to see underused public sector assets put to good use by communities themselves.

And as we move to meet the climate change challenge, I want to see more people able to live and work in our countryside. I am determined that the digital revolution benefits rural as well as urban Scots. Over these next five years we will be working hard to extend superfast broadband throughout rural Scotland. This can open up new opportunities for a different way of living and working that encourage strong and growing rural towns and villages and respects and protects our environment.

Richard Lochhead

Growing the Rural Economy and Creating Jobs

We've been speaking to people in communities across rural Scotland and heard the issues that are most important to them. We will continue to invest in rural jobs and growing the rural economy. That means taking forward our rural development programme, helping rural businesses expand, diversify and create jobs, with priorities to be agreed with stakeholders such as food production, renewable energy, climate change and a value-added approach. And because we know the importance to businesses and families of digital connection we will invest in the rural roll out of high-speed broadband across Scotland.

A big part of creating more prosperous and sustainable communities across Scotland is ensuring a greater benefit for communities from our nation's substantial natural assets. We want to see more community benefit from renewable energy and so will take forward our proposal for a new £2.4 million fund to enable community investment in renewables projects, securing a long-term return and income for those communities who become involved.

We will also create a new Rural Innovation Fund to support new community enterprise initiatives in rural Scotland, helping communities establish successful local businesses. And we will further expand tourism opportunities around outdoor activity, food and drink and Scotland's culture.

We also want to see an expansion of the mutual model in rural Scotland and will support the creation of rural co-operatives, including local energy co-operatives to enable communities to take forward their own local renewables projects. We will make the case for further devolution in this area to enable a more rapid expansion of co-operatives in rural Scotland.

And to ensure the voice of rural Scotland is heard, we will take forward proposals for a rural parliament to enable rural communities to engage more effectively with government.

Increasing the Value of our Fishing Industry

Fishing remains a vital industry for Scotland. It is worth more than £1 billion to the Scottish economy. Over the past four years we have worked closely with our fishing industry and other partners to secure a stronger future for the industry in

the face of a Common Fisheries Policy that hampers rather than helps our efforts to conserve stocks.

Our priority over the next five years will be to achieve discard-free fisheries in Scottish waters and increase the value of landings for our fishermen. We want to see more fish landed alongside an overall reduction in mortality rates. This will require a change of approach at a European level, and we will continue to make the case for radical reform of the EU's fisheries policy to give a greater say and control to the fishing nations and to the fishing communities. The CFP is well past its sell-by date.

We will develop a national strategy for Fisheries Dependent Areas to support economic development and encourage local authorities, along with our fishing communities, to develop regional action plans to strengthen local fishing-related economies around our shores. In partnership with the industry we will look to restore the identity and status of fishing as an occupation of choice and continue to support research in fishing to help map out the most profitable future for the industry.

We will work to support the expansion of exports of quality Scottish fish and shellfish and encourage more Scots to eat fish and shellfish as part of our healthier eating strategy. And we will continue our efforts to secure MCS sustainability status for more Scottish stocks, knowing that this is good not only for the future of stocks but also for the positioning of Scottish fish as a premium product in international markets.

We will continue to support Inshore Fisheries Groups and work for an ongoing increase in the value of inshore sales. We will investigate the potential for more low-impact fisheries and we will introduce industry-led measures for the static gear sector such as creels. We want to see wider marine regeneration with the benefits this will bring for stocks and will explore with the industry the development of inshore sustainable fisheries pilots. And we will also take forward a Small Harbours Initiative to help promote and diversify our small coastal communities.

We will work with our Higher Education Institutions and industry to explore the establishment of a centre of excellence for fisheries management.

A Commitment to Food Production and Growing Farm Businesses

The primary purpose of agriculture in Scotland is and has to be the production of food. We will develop a value-added strategy for Scottish farm produce, linked to our successful food and drink policy. We want to see a greater return for Scottish farmers for the food they produce and new opportunities to develop new products for market.

We are determined to maintain food production at the heart of our agriculture policy. And we will build on the principles of the Pack Inquiry in partnership with the industry.

Over the next few years we will see reform of the CAP. Scotland has distinctive needs and we will continue to make the case for our farming sector with UK ministers and in discussions at EU level. Scotland's interest must be recognised and in particular we will argue for the continuation of direct support and for a move away from historic payment towards a regime that rewards active agriculture and caters for new entrants.

We will publish an agri-renewables strategy and will continue to support renewable energy solutions to increase sustainability and profitability of farm businesses, as part of our wider efforts to deliver higher levels of sustainable growth in our rural economy. We will also take forward our action plan for organic food and farming.

We recognise the important place of crofting in our society and the contribution it makes to health and strength of many rural communities. We will encourage the creation of new crofts especially on public land.

We will amend the Agricultural Holdings Act to support tenant farmers and will work to encourage new entrants. We also believe that when a farm business is being passed from one generation to the next it should be easier for the successor to build a home on the farm where required.

Reducing Burdens on Rural Businesses

Since 2007 progress has been made in reducing the number of inspection visits to Scottish farms through the SEARS initiative, but this only a start. We have as our ambition the delivery, where possible, of a one-visit approach.

To reduce the bureaucracy facing farm businesses we will take forward proposals for a Funds Gateway – an online portal and single point of access for fund applications. We will investigate the creation of a single IT platform for Scotland's rural agencies to enable information to be shared more easily and will pilot a SEARS kitemark that will be recognised across agencies as indicating that a premises has reached an agreed standard. We will also encourage agencies to move to a more risk-based assessment, and begin a process of review of existing regulation to streamline requirements within the legal limits that exist.

A Fair Deal on Fuel

We will continue to press the UK government to take action to lower fuel prices in Scotland, with the introduction of a Fuel Price Regulator and specific derogations to allow substantially lower fuel duty levels in both remote and island communities where pump prices are particularly high. We believe the action announced by the UK government in its recent budget is nowhere near enough. Given the additional windfall revenues accruing to the government in London as a result of higher world oil prices there is substantial opportunity for a significant reduction in fuel duty. The Chancellor's approach of delivering a mere 1p reduction in fuel duty at the expense of jobs and investment in the North Sea is the wrong one for Scotland and serves to highlight the need for the Scottish Parliament to take responsibility for Scotland's oil and gas resources and revenues.

Aquaculture

Scotland's aquaculture sector has a big contribution to make to our economy, nationally and locally. We will build on the successful industry-government partnership and work to deliver continuing growth in sales. With the industry we will ensure appropriate regulation on nets and containment and call for a more joined-up approach at EU level to strategic science on issues like sea lice.

Freshwater Fisheries

We will support and protect our famous and valuable salmon and freshwater fisheries. We will modernise the management structures and continue investing in the Strategic Framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries.

Stronger Rural Communities

Strong rural communities are an essential part of a flourishing rural Scotland. That's why we have delivered a post office diversification fund to help keep local post offices open. We are also taking forward proposals to make sure there is a proper exploration of alternatives to rural school closure.

We will continue to roll out the Emergency Medical Retrieval Service to enhance access to consultants in emergency situations in rural areas and expand tele-health to deliver improved access to specialists for rural communities.

Flooding

We have delivered increased investment in flood prevention measures and passed the necessary legislation to allow us to meet the ongoing threat of flooding as a result of climate change. We will take forward the production of Scotland's first statutory guidance to ensure the public sector adopts a sustainable and collaborative approach to managing the risk. And, to help prepare communities for floods and to ensure a more effective early response to flooding we will work with the voluntary sector to establish a network of first responders who will be in position to provide the initial support to their communities in the event of flooding.

Forestry

We will keep the Forestry Commission as a publicly-owned body and our forestry estate as an asset for the nation. Given the recent proposals from the Conservative government in London we believe the Scottish Parliament should now have full responsibility for all forestry issues in Scotland. We believe this is the only way to protect our forests from the impact of future Tory plans.

Our forestry estate represents a huge opportunity for our nation. We are committed to planting 100 million trees by 2015 as part of our action on climate change and this will mean an expansion of our forestry estate. We want to see the continued growth of woods in and around our towns and cities given the undoubted recreational and health benefits these provide, and look to see an increased proportion of planting of native species. Given the importance of our ancient woodland we will also begin a consultation on actions we can take to protect these highly biodiverse woodlands.

We will support the Forestry Commission as it takes forwards its plans to increase renewables generation on forestry land, and commend the community benefit proposals contained within these plans. In particular we support the expansion of small-scale hydro and more effective harvesting to provide more material for local, small-scale biomass.

As part of our efforts to expand forestry cover we will promote integrated land use and seek to protect agricultural land.

Environmental and Wildlife Crime

Following the passage of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act we will now take forward the implementation of this legislation. And, over the next five years, we will look to increase penalties for environmental and wildlife crime and include these crimes within the Proceeds of Crime Act so that assets and cash seized as a result can be invested in the protection of our environment.

We have received representations calling for the creation of an Environmental Court in Scotland, potentially building on Scotland's current Land Court. We are open-minded about this, but wish to seek wider views. We will, therefore, publish an options paper as the basis for a wider engagement on this proposal.

Land Reform

We believe it is time for a review of Scotland's land reform legislation. For example, we believe the current period for three months for communities to take advantage of their right of first purchase is too short, and we would wish to see it extended to six months. We will establish a Land Reform Review Group to advise on this and other improvements which we will legislate on over the course of the next five years. We will also establish a new Scottish Land Fund and will set out our proposals in this area by the end of 2011.

“The Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March of 1707, is hereby reconvened.”



Overlaid on a portrait of Roland Muirhead, the first honorary president of the SNP, (from top) Winnie Ewing, Robert McIntyre, Roseanna Cunningham, posters from the historic 1967 Hamilton by-election and the 1977 It's Scotland's oil campaign, and Alex Salmond preparing to address the nation in 2007.

The world has changed immeasurably since 1934 – the year in which our party was founded – but we have remained true to our core aims of securing Scottish independence and driving Scotland forward.

Our Journey

Our first electoral success came in 1945 when Dr Robert McIntyre won the Motherwell by-election during the final days of the Second World War. Our membership and support continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This culminated in the sensational win for Winnie Ewing in the Hamilton By-election in 1967, on a swing of almost 40% from Labour, after which she memorably declared “Stop the world, Scotland wants to get on.” During her years in Westminster, Winnie had an electrifying effect on Scottish politics, and confirmed the Scottish National Party as a serious political force.

In 1970 North Sea Oil was discovered, with 90% of it lying in Scottish waters. This led to one of our most successful campaigns – It's Scotland's Oil. With new oil fields still being found to this day, there is no doubt that Scotland should be responsible for its own natural resources. During 2008-09, in the middle of the recent severe recession, Scotland was in surplus to the tune of £1.3 billion, compared to a UK deficit of £48.9 billion – just think what we could do to tackle poverty and create jobs in Scotland with responsibility for these resources.

The oil campaign caused Scots to wonder why their nation was so resource rich, yet so plagued by poverty. It helped deliver our best-ever Westminster electoral performance in October 1974 – taking 11 seats and winning 30% of the vote in Scotland. The emergence of a strong Scottish voice sent more shockwaves through Westminster and put devolution for Scotland firmly on the agenda. However, the ‘yes’ vote from the Scottish people in 1979 fell foul of the notorious “forty per cent rule,” where many people who wouldn't vote or couldn't vote were effectively counted as ‘no’ voters. This postponed Scotland's desire for devolution for two decades and condemned Scotland to spend 18 years under a Conservative Government for which it had never voted.

During the long, dark days of the 1980s, we continued to stand up for Scotland at Westminster. The 1988 SNP party conference endorsed the use of civil disobedience to defy the poll tax. Our high-profile and concerted campaign against this tax led to yet another spectacular by-election victory in 1988, this time for Jim Sillars in Govan. And as the Tory government began to collapse, Roseanna Cunningham secured another important by-election victory, ousting the Conservatives in Perth & Kinross in 1995.

Devolution finally became a reality for Scotland with a referendum in 1979 and a resurgent SNP took part in the ‘yes, yes’ campaign. As the oldest MSP, it fell to an emotional Winnie Ewing – more than three decades after her first electoral success – to open the Parliament with the words, “the Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March of 1707, is hereby reconvened.”

Devolution has given us a much bigger platform to stand up for Scotland's interests. We campaigned resolutely against the moral outrage that was the Iraq war, and are the only major party in Scotland which is unequivocal in its opposition to spending £100 billion on a new generation of weapons of mass destruction.

It is our strong campaigning on issues like these which led to the people of Scotland choosing us to form the government in 2007. Alex Salmond summed it up best the day after the election when he quoted Alasdair Gray, “work as though you are in the early days of a better nation.” This has driven everything we have done over the last four years. Whether it is freezing the council tax, restoring free education to Scotland, or reducing recorded crime by a fifth, we know we have a record in office of which we can be proud.

Our vision for Scotland in 2011 remains what it was seventy-seven years ago – we want to see Scotland have responsibility for its own destiny and take its rightful place among small, successful independent countries. There is so much more we could do with the powers of any other nation. We will always have unlimited ambition for Scotland and its people.

ACHIEVEMENTS THAT ARE GOOD FOR SCOTLAND

Alex Salmond leads an experienced government team focused on building on the strong foundations laid during its four years in office. The SNP goes into the election with a strong record on policy delivery and with real ambition for our nation's future success.



Scan the QR code with your smartphone or visit bepartofbetter.net to see a full list of 100 achievements.

CHEAPER AIR TRAVEL

SALTIRE PRIZE FOR MARINE ENERGY INNOVATION

WORLD LEADER IN GREEN ENERGY

NHS FUNDING PROTECTED

TOUGH NEW HOSPITAL INSPECTORATE

CHEAPER FERRY FARES

FLOOD DEFENCE INVESTMENT

SMALL BUSINESS BONUS

COUNCIL TAX FROZEN

A96 UPGRADE

PROTECTING FISHERIES

RURAL SCHOOLS PROTECTED

1,000 MORE POLICE

ABERDEEN DENTAL SCHOOL

FREE PRESCRIPTIONS

SMALLER CLASS SIZES

MORE NURSERY EDUCATION

FREE BUS TRAVEL PROTECTED

£2,300 GRADUATE ENDOWMENT SCRAPPED

DUNDEE V&A

QUANGOS SLASHED

330 SCHOOLS BUILT/REFURBISHED

BRIDGE TOLLS SCRAPPED

NEW FORTH CROSSING

NEW SOUTH GLASGOW HOSPITAL

AIRDRIE-BATHGATE RAIL LINK

MONKLANDS A&E SAVED

24,000 AFFORDABLE HOMES

M80 AND M74 EXTENDED

3,300 NEW COUNCIL HOUSES

NEW FARMERS FUND

AYR A&E SAVED

LIVING WAGE IN THE NHS

£40M SEIZED FROM CRIMINALS

SMALL POST OFFICES SAVED

25,000 MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS

ONLY **ONE** PARTY HAS
SCOTLAND
AT ITS **HEART**

IN TOUGH TIMES • WE'VE PUT 1,000 MORE POLICE ON SCOTLAND'S STREETS, HELPING DRIVE RECORDED CRIME DOWN TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL FOR 32 YEARS • WE'VE ABOLISHED PRESCRIPTION CHARGES, SAVING PEOPLE WITH LONG-TERM ILLNESSES AN AVERAGE OF MORE THAN £180 • WE'VE RESTORED FREE HIGHER EDUCATION BY ABOLISHING THE £2,300 GRADUATE ENDOWMENT - A BACK DOOR TUITION FEE • WE'VE TRANSFORMED SCOTLAND INTO A WORLD LEADER IN GREEN ENERGY, WITH A RECORD 39 NEW RENEWABLE PROJECTS SINCE WE CAME TO POWER AND PIONEERING CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION • WE'VE REMOVED TOLLS ON THE FORTH AND TAY BRIDGES, SAVING COMMUTERS £184 A YEAR ON CROSSING THE TAY AND £207 A YEAR ON CROSSING THE FORTH • OUR NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON SCOTLAND'S FUTURE LED TO A WHITE PAPER AND DRAFT REFERENDUM BILL ON SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE • WE'VE KEPT HEALTHCARE LOCAL. THAT MEANS A&E UNITS HAVE BEEN SAVED, CHILDREN'S CANCER HOSPITALS AND NEUROSURGERY UNITS PROTECTED AND MATERNITY UNITS KEPT OPEN • WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO OFFER A RECORD-BREAKING 20,000 MODERN APPRENTICESHIPS THIS YEAR - THAT'S A MASSIVE 28 PER CENT INCREASE ON 2007 • WE'VE PROVIDED VITAL SUPPORT FOR THE STAGING OF TWO OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST SPORTING EVENTS HERE IN SCOTLAND IN 2014 - THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES IN GLASGOW AND THE RYDER CUP AT GLENEAGLES • WE'VE STARTED 24,000 AFFORDABLE HOUSES SINCE COMING INTO OFFICE IN 2007 - THAT'S AN AVERAGE OF 117 NEW HOUSES EVERY WEEK • WE'RE HELPING SOME OF THE WORLD'S POOREST PEOPLE BY DOUBLING THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BUDGET AND PROTECTING THAT CASH FROM UK CUTS • WE'VE CUT THE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND MINISTERS • WE'VE PROVIDED VALUABLE FUNDING TO SECURE THE DUNDEE V&A, THE NEW BANNOCKBURN VISITOR CENTRE, AND THE CREATION OF THE ROBERT BURNS BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM IN AYRSHIRE • OUR £10 MILLION PRIZE FOR MARINE ENERGY INNOVATION AIMS TO MAKE SCOTLAND THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD IN THIS EXCITING SECTOR OF RENEWABLE POWER • WE'VE PROVIDED EXTRA FUNDING FOR SCOTLAND'S VETERAN CHARITIES AND ENSURED OUR EX-SERVICEMEN RECEIVE PRIORITY TREATMENT IN THE NHS • OUR COUNCIL OF ECONOMIC ADVISERS HAS PROVIDED INVALUABLE GUIDANCE TO THE SNP GOVERNMENT IN THESE TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES • WE'VE ENCOURAGED THE PUBLIC TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE SCOTTISH CABINET ABOUT ISSUES OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL IMPORTANCE EACH SUMMER WITH A SERIES OF VISITS TO EVERY CORNER OF SCOTLAND • WE'VE ESTABLISHED CREATIVE SCOTLAND AS A SINGLE, NATIONAL BODY FOR THE ARTS, CULTURE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES • WE'VE PROTECTED SPENDING IN THE NHS WITH AN EXTRA £1.14 BILLION OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS TO SAFEGUARD FRONTLINE SERVICES - THAT'S £2,800 FOR EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD IN SCOTLAND • WE'VE REDUCED HOSPITAL WAITING TIMES TO A RECORD LOW FOR OUTPATIENTS - THEY ARE NOW 13 DAYS SHORTER THAN THEY WERE UNDER LABOUR. HOSPITAL INPATIENT WAITING TIMES HAVE ALSO BEEN CUT DRAMATICALLY - BY 19 DAYS COMPARED TO LABOUR • WE'VE FUNDED 100,000 EXTRA HOURS IN THE NHS, HELPING ENSURE INFECTION IN SCOTTISH HOSPITALS IS NOW AT AN ALL-TIME LOW • WE'VE BANNED IRRESPONSIBLE ALCOHOL DISCOUNTS IN SUPERMARKETS AND OFF LICENSING • MORE SCOTS ARE REGISTERED WITH NHS DENTISTS UNDER OUR SNP GOVERNMENT THAN UNDER ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT • WE'VE MADE SURE OUR OLDER PEOPLE ARE CARED FOR BY INCREASING PAYMENTS FOR FREE PERSONAL AND NURSING CARE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE IT WAS INTRODUCED • WE'VE DELIVERED ON OUR AMBITIOUS CANCER TARGET WHICH MEANS TREATMENT BEGINS WITHIN ONE MONTH OF A DECISION TO TREAT • WE'VE PROVIDED £840 MILLION TO BUILD THE NEW SOUTH GLASGOW HOSPITAL • WE'VE CUT THE RISK FROM CERVICAL CANCER FOR THE

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